



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

Monday 15 July 2024 at 7.30 pm

Conference Room 1 - 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 Barry-Mears (Chair)
Councillor Adeleke
Councillor Barradell
Councillor Johnson
Councillor Pesch
Councillor Williams
Councillor Banks

Councillor Pringle
Councillor Smith-Wright
Councillor Stevens
Councillor McArevey
Councillor Deacon
Councillor Link
Councillor Santamaria

For further information, please contact Corporate and Democratic Support

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes from the previous meeting

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

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

6. ACTION POINTS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 3 - 5)

7. Q4 QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (Pages 6 - 17)

8. RSH CONSUMER STANDARDS SELF-ASSESSMENT (Pages 18 - 82)

9. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW (Pages 83 - 92)

10. FORWARD PLAN (Pages 93 - 97)

Housing and Community OSC

Actions arising – 2024-2025

Date of meeting	Action point	Responsible for action	Date action completed	Update on action point
<p><u>13/09/23</u> <u>HC/52/23</u></p>	<p>Member development – a visit to the adventure playgroup to view the activities that are happening.</p>	<p>D Southam</p>	<p>To arrange a member development session for summer next year.</p>	<p>With Member Support.</p>
<p><u>13/03/2024</u></p>	<p>To look into the consultancy review for Cllr Banks</p>	<p>D Southam</p>	<p>11/4/24</p>	<p>Response sent to Cllr Bank 11 April – once it is confirmed no follow up questions to include in response a final version will be sent to all committee members. Update 16/4/24 – Cllr Banks confirmed no follow up questions and so response as set out below – Chair has agreed just to update tracker rather than circulate response. <i>At Housing and Community OSC, you asked about the previous Old Town Hall review.</i></p> <p><i>As you know this was undertaken prior to my arrival and the implementation of the new structure and Diana’s subsequent appointment. We have moved forward with our service plans and thinking and as I have been reporting will be undertaking a more in depth service review of the Old Town Hall that include what the offer is etc and goes beyond the physical aspects of the building – although this will of course be included.</i></p> <p><i>I’m not sure why the previous findings weren’t reported back but I suspect it was due to the change in management of the theatre and resourcing. However, as you quite right!</i></p>

				<p>suggested at the committee and as mentioned above, time has moved on and we will consider the previous review as part of the in depth review we are currently scoping and it will all be wrapped up into one report.</p> <p>Hope that is helpful – let me know if you have any follow up questions and then, once finalised I will send a final response to all committee members</p>
	<i>J Bank had a question for the PH Question who wasn't at the meeting (please refer to the full minutes)</i>	<i>S Dhyani</i>		<i>I support the health hub, and it doesn't mean that it stops us from seeking a full hospital for Hemel in future.</i>
	why is there no tuck shop at every adventure playground site.	D Southam	15/04/24	<p>Response sent to the Chair as follows. Chair has agreed just to update tracker rather than circulate response.</p> <p>At H&C OSC you asked why there wasn't a tuck shop at each APG.</p> <p>Apologies for delay in replying.</p> <p>There is a tuck shop at each of the APG's. They are only open at certain times due to the ability to staff them.</p>
	NB to circulate ASB links for Cllr Pesch and circulate more info for Cllr Banks.	N Beresford		<p>Details about the ASB review can be found here and the process of submitting a review. https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/community-living/community-safety-dacorum/anti-social-behaviour/anti-social-behaviour-case-review</p> <p>In relation to reporting instances of anti-social behaviour or relating concerns further details can be found here:</p>

				<p>https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/community-living/community-safety-dacorum/anti-social-behaviour</p> <p>Dacorum Borough Council Tenants can report Anti-Social Behaviour by emailing asb@dacorum.gov.uk And for non DBC tenants Community Safety and Safeguarding Mailbox communitysafetyandsafeguarding@dacorum.gov.uk</p> <p>Reporting anti-social behaviour to your registered provider https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/community-living/community-safety-dacorum/anti-social-behaviour/registered-social-housing-providers</p>
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Report for:	Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Provisional Financial Outturn 2023/24
Date:	15 th July 2024
Report on behalf of:	CLlr Michela Capozzi, Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Commercial Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix A – General Fund Revenue Provisional Outturn 2023/24 Appendix B – Housing Revenue Account Provisional Outturn 2023/24 Appendix C – Housing and Community Capital Programme Provisional Outturn 2023/24
Background papers:	None.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	GF – General Fund HRA – Housing Revenue Account

Report Author

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Corporate Priorities

- 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:	<p>1. To provide details of the provisional financial outturn 2023/24 for the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Fund • Housing Revenue Account • Capital Programme
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	<p>To note the provisional 2023/24 provisional financial outturn position and associated reserve movements for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme.</p> <p>To note the proposed reserve movements, virements and supplementary budgets highlighted in the report.</p>
Period for post policy/project review:	The Council's financial position is reported to committee on an ongoing, quarterly basis.

1. Introduction:

The report presents the provisional 2023/24 financial outturn position for the Council as at 31st March 2024. The final position for the year is subject to:

- Finalisation of reserve movements.
- The completion of the audit of the Council's accounts by the Council's external auditors KPMG.

The report focuses in particular on services falling under the remit of Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. Executive Summary:

2.1 Key Provisional Outturn Figures

The General Fund revenue budget is forecasting an underlying surplus of £0.489m, of which a surplus of £0.294m relates to Housing and Community services. A request will be taken to Cabinet to recommend to Full Council that this surplus be transferred to the following reserves to fund future initiatives.

- £0.006m to the Council Tax Hardship Reserve
- £0.025m to the Housing Conditions Survey Reserve
- £0.458m to the Invest to Save Reserve

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is forecasting a residual pressure of £0.294m at year end. This position includes the release of a £0.650m from an HRA provision following review of the balance held. A request for a net drawdown from HRA reserves of £0.294m will be taken to Cabinet to recommend to Full Council in order to balance the outturn position.

Housing and Community General Fund capital is reporting further slippage of £0.300m compared to the position at quarter 3 2023/24, largely relating to Disabled Facilities Grant. Housing and Community General Fund capital is underspent by £0.097m relating to the creation of move on- accommodation for rough sleepers at Aragon Close.

HRA capital has additional slippage from the position reported at quarter 3 2023/24 of £4.955m and an underspend of £0.223m.

2.2 Summary Narrative and Forward Look

During 2023/24 the Council experienced significant revenue pressures across its General Fund (£0.500m) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) (£0.150m) budgets relating to the staff 2023/24 staff pay award.

Further expenditure pressures for the General Fund arose due to agency staff costs associated with the delivery of the Council's Waste service (£0.606m). Whilst some General Fund revenue streams performed below budget such as Planning income (£0.282m shortfall against target), others performed over target such as income from Garden Waste (£0.821m additional income over target) and income from the investment of the Council's cash balances (£3.444m additional income over target). Overall, General Fund pressures were covered by additional income and underspends, leaving an overall surplus of £0.489m.

The Housing Revenue Account experienced significant expenditure pressures against budgets for the repair and maintenance of Council housing stock due to demand for works (£5.283m). Other expenditure pressures included supervision and management costs, which includes interim staff costs, support service costs and insurance costs (£1.75m total expenditure pressure). Income for the HRA performed well during the year, with rental income delivering £0.956m over target and income from the investment of HRA cash balances delivering £1.775m over target. The HRA's overall position is a deficit of £0.294m. A request will be made for Cabinet to recommend to Full Council to draw down from HRA revenue reserves to balance the overall position.

The Council set a balanced budget for 2024/25 in February 2024. This budget addressed known variances arising during 2023/24. Further review of the Council's expected position for 2024/25 has been undertaken following completion of the Council's provisional outturn position.

Risks remain within the Council's financial position in the current financial year. Within the General Fund, these include those relating to key income streams such as parking. Expenditure pressures seen during 2023/24 within the Council's Waste service are likely to continue into 2024/25. Within the Housing Revenue Account, the demand for repairs and maintenance to Council Homes continues. Insurance costs, driven by claims relating to water ingress, damp and mould are also expected to continue into 2024/25.

These risks are being closely monitored by service leads with support from the Council's Finance team. Emerging variances to budget and associated mitigating actions will be communicated to Members as part of the Council's regular financial reporting arrangements.

3. General Fund Position – all Scrutiny Committee Areas

Appendix A provides an overview of the General Fund forecast outturn position. The table below provides an overview for by scrutiny area.

Table 1- General Fund Position by Scrutiny Area	Current Budget £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Variance	
			£m	%
Finance & Resources	9.317	11.799	2.482	26.6%
Strategic Planning and Environment	12.599	13.979	1.380	11.0%
Housing & Community	1.876	1.582	(0.294)	(15.7%)
Operational Cost	23.792	27.360	3.568	15.0%
Core Funding	(23.792)	(27.849)	(4.057)	17.1%
Contribution (to)/ from General Fund Working Balance	0.000	(0.489)	(0.489)	

4. General Fund Position- Housing and Community

Table 2 – Housing and Community General Fund	Current Budget	Forecast	Variance	
	£m	£m	£m	%
Housing & Property	1.228	0.839	(0.389)	(31.7%)
Neighbourhood Delivery	(2.369)	(2.342)	0.027	(1.1%)
Corporate and Commercial	(0.043)	0.000	0.043	(100.0%)
People and Transformation	1.162	1.330	0.168	14.5%
Place	1.898	1.755	(0.143)	(7.5%)
Total Operating Cost	1.876	1.582	(0.294)	(15.7%)

4.1 Variances for 2023/24 reported against Housing and Communities General Fund service areas are outlined below.

4.2 Housing and Property

Demand for Temporary Accommodation has increased in 2023/24, leading to an increase in costs of placing residents in hotels. This is a statutory duty of the Council, the increase in costs being driven by the rising number of referrals to temporary accommodation. The increased demand has led to increased repairs and maintenance to our temporary accommodation at a pressure of £0.200m and also an increase in utility costs of £0.048m. Due to the high number of referrals, Temporary Accommodation have seen high occupancy rate in their hostels. This has meant the Council has received £0.366m more income than budgeted for, that offsets the pressures detailed in the previous paragraph.

Closed Circuit Television have not fully achieved the service commercial income target in 2023/24, resulting in a pressure of £0.093m. Income targets for the service have been reviewed as part of the 2024/25 budget to address this shortfall.

A pressure of £0.031m is reported on Licencing fees. These pressures are offset by underspend in staffing of £0.081m due to vacancies within the service.

There are vacancies within the Community Safety team leading to an underspend of £0.033m.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced a £0.270m top to the Homelessness Prevention Grant part way through 2023/24. This allowed the Council to fund some homelessness prevention activity through the grant, reducing the net cost of the service to the Council by £0.068m.

4.3 Corporate and Commercial

Licensing income has a pressure of £0.053m for 2023/24 relating to annual licence fees. A significant number of the fees are set by statute and not controlled by Dacorum. The service will monitor this position closely to identify if there is likely to be a continued risk into 2024/25.

4.4 Neighbourhood Operations

Garage Income was 2% below budget, giving a forecast pressure for the service £0.058m. A large number of garages were repaired in 2023/24, focusing on those where there is a waiting list. The remaining sites

are currently being reviewed for the best approach to take in regard to the remaining void stock, to maximise value for money associated with the use of these assets.

4.5 People and Transformation

The pressure of £0.135m on People and Transformation relates to additional services supplied to the Housing Revenue Account, these pressures are picked up within the recharge to the HRA and covered within the Core Funding.

4.6 Place

A surplus for the Old Town Hall is reported of £0.058m. This is due to strong income being received from operations surplus of £0.101m, staff vacancies £0.043m, offset by pressures on supplies and services budgets £0.076m.

Community grants are underspent by £0.150m as a result of a reduction in applicants compared to previous financial years. The service are looking at how to increase engagement in the process and will work with the voluntary sector as part of this.

4.7 Risks to Housing and Communities General Fund 2024/25 Budgets

Temporary Accommodation will be an area of financial focus for 2024/25. Demand is increasing as a result of the cost of living and also the allocation of asylum cases to be housed. The service is monitoring demand closely and will report accordingly on the position in 2024/25.

5. Housing Revenue Account Position

5.1 The HRA is a ring-fenced account relating to the Council's landlord functions. It is accounted for separately from General Fund services. A guiding principle of the HRA is that revenue raised from rents and service charges must be sufficient to fund expenditure incurred. The provisional outturn position for the HRA is shown at Appendix B.

5.2 The provisional HRA balance at the end of 2023/24 is a net pressure of £0.294m. This is summarised as follows:

Table 3: Summary Housing Revenue Account Position

Housing Revenue Account	Current Budget £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Variance £m
Income	(63.939)	(67.305)	(3.366)
Expenditure	63.774	68.084	4.310
Reduction in provisions	0.000	(0.650)	(0.650)
Transfer to the HRA Working Balance (reserve movement)	0.165	0.165	0.000
Net Deficit / Surplus	0.000	0.294	0.294

5.3 Variances for 2023/24 reported against Housing Revenue Account service areas are outlined below.

5.4 Supervision and Management

A pressure of £0.351m is being seen on employee budget due to interim management within the HRA as work continues on the Housing Transformation Improvement Programme (HTIP) and agency staff cover vacancies across the service.

The pay award caused a pressure of £0.150m across the HRA.

Utility costs for sheltered housing caused pressure of £0.311m. These costs will be accounted for in the calculation of the service charges for tenants in future years.

There is a pressure of £0.625m in respect of insurance cost relating to increased claims in respect of damp and mould.

5.5 Repairs & Maintenance

Continuing from 2022/23, there has been a continued high demand for repairs and maintenance for housing along with inflationary increases to the works undertaken. The main demand and pressures are from Responsive Repairs and Empty Homes as shown in the table below.

Offsetting this increased pressure is a gain share from the main housing repairs contract. This is £0.464m for 2023/24. The gain share is not budgeted within the HRA budgets. The gain share has the effect of reducing the pressures on HRA repairs and maintenance costs.

Table 4: Breakdown of HRA Revenue Repairs and Maintenance Financial Forecast

	Budget £m	Outturn £m	Variance £m
Main Contract Overheads	2.183	2.751	0.568
Contract Pain and Gain	0.000	(0.464)	(0.464)
Cyclical Planned Maintenance	0.933	0.474	(0.459)
Compliance Planned Maintenance	3.301	3.191	(0.109)
Responsive Repairs	4.469	8.689	4.220
Empty Homes	3.745	5.236	1.491
Recharge to GF	(0.037)	0.00	0.037
Total	14.594	19.877	5.283

5.6 Income

Dwelling rent has a surplus of £0.956m, due to occupancy and voids rates. The budget is based on occupation at budget setting. When a tenancy changes, the new tenant is charged rent based on the target weekly rent for the property which is often higher than that charged to the previous tenant. Given the number of void relets in 2023/24, this has increased the rental income for the service.

Contribution to expenditure is income received from leaseholders for works to housing blocks. The cost of this work is recovered based on actual costs. There have been a significant number of major works completed over the last 12 months resulting in a higher income forecast from contributions.

5.7 HRA- Technical and Accounting Adjustments

Cash balances remain higher than budgeted, as capital HRA spend is 30% behind budget. This has the effect of increased cash balances, resulting in increased returns on cash investments, additional income of £1.797m for the HRA.

Given the pressures and demands on the HRA budgets, the budgeted revenue contribution to capital for 2023/24 has been redirected to support revenue expenditure. This contribution was reviewed as part of 2024/25 budget setting. Given demand on revenue repairs works, this contribution is likely to be removed from future budgets. A reduction in allocation to capital reserves means other capital financing options must be used. This can increase future borrowing requirements and associated future cost of capital.

The expected increase to the bad debt provision for the HRA has been lower than expected £0.182m. An increase in provision was required for leasehold properties, this is linked to the large invoices for

improvements to the blocks. The cost of living has meant that the repayment plans for these works are for a longer period than previously experienced and an increase in provision is held to account for the risk to the council. The bad debt provision for Council tenants has remained at a similar level to previous years and therefore the full budget to increase provision is not required.

5.8 Risks to HRA Budgets for 2024/25

The HRA position for 2023/24 has benefitted from a one-off provision release and draw down from revenue reserves. Reserves are finite in nature and cannot be relied on up to sustain the HRA indefinitely.

Within the Housing Revenue Account, the demand for repairs and maintenance to Council Homes represents the biggest ongoing risk for the financial sustainability of the Council's housing landlord function. The repairs and maintenance budget for 2024/25 has increased to £19.077m, the outturn for 2023/24 was £19.877m. If demands on repairs remains high in 2024/25, further pressures could be felt on these budgets. The Housing and Property service will monitor this closely in 2024/25 to try to reduce budget pressures where possible.

Insurance costs, driven by claims relating to water ingress, damp and mould are also expected to continue into 2024/25.

Over the last few years, the Council has seen large increases in the utility costs. Within the HRA, this has been seen in relation to supported housing. Although these costs are recovered through future service charges, there is a timing delay in associated cost recovery to offset this pressure.

Staffing costs also represent a risk to the HRA, with agency appointments to posts being made and permanent recruitment on hold as the service awaits the outcome of the Housing Transformation Improvement Programme review. This could impact budgets in 2024/25.

5.9 HRA Revenue Virements for 2024/25

Following the review of repairs and maintenance priorities for 2024/25 the following virements will be recommended to Cabinet to approve for 2024/25. This represents a realignment of previously approved budget and does not represent growth to the HRA.

Asset Management service

Cyclical General Maintenance	reduction of £0.487m
DBC Commissioned Responsive	increase of £0.750m
DBC Commissioned Empty Homes Responsive	reduction of £0.233m

Safe Homes service

DBC Commissioned Responsive	reduction of £1.247m
Planned Repairs Total Asset Management	
– Safe Homes	increase of £0.487m
Responsive Repairs – Safe Homes	increase of £0.497m
Empty Homes – Safe Homes	increase of £0.233m

6. General Fund reserve transfer requests

6.1 Cabinet will be asked to recommend to Council to approve the following reserve requests for Housing and Community services, relating to 2023/24:

- Contribution of additional Leisure income of £0.095m to the Leisure Reserve

- Contribution to reserves relating to Private Sector Housing income £0.025m to Housing Conditions Survey Reserve to be drawn down in 2024/25.

Cabinet will be asked to recommend Council to approve the following reserve requests relating to 2024/25:

- Drawdown from the Civic Buildings Reserve of £0.040m to deliver a structural review of leisure centres to determine future investment.

7. Capital Programme

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

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

The current budget is the original budget approved by Cabinet in February 2023, plus approved amendments.

The 'rephasing' column refers to projects where expenditure is still expected to be incurred but will now be in 2024/25 rather than 2023/24 ('slippage'), or conversely, where expenditure planned initially for 2024/25 has been incurred in 2023/24 ('accelerated spend').

The 'Variance' column refers to projects which are expected to come in under or over budget and projects which are no longer required.

Table 5 - Capital Outturn 2023-24	Current Budget	Re-phasing (To)/from future years	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	
	£m	£m	£0m	£m	£m	%
Housing & Community General Fund	4.517	(0.300)	4.218	4.120	(0.097)	(2.15%)
HRA Total	59.432	(4.955)	54.477	54.254	(0.223)	(0.38%)

7.2 General Fund Capital Programme Major Variances

Housing and Community General Fund capital budgets are reporting and underspend of £0.097m relating to move- on accommodation at Aragon close. Housing and Community General Fund capital is also reporting slippage of £0.300m. The slippage includes the following items over £0.100m:

- Disabled Facilities Grant £0.236m – applications for DFG are continuing with further spend in 2024/25.

7.3 Housing Revenue Account

Following a review of the forecasts and project progression for HRA capital budgets further slippage of £5.595m in respected of planned expenditure to existing HRA properties and (£0.643m) in respect of new housing developments.

Slippage in respect of existing HRA properties is a result of capacity of Council contractors, mobilisation issues for decant homes programme, asbestos surveys being required and a high percentage of access

refusal. In addition, a project in respect of the roof at Pelham Court has been delayed due to procurement and working with telecommunications providers in respect of equipment on the roof.

Slippage in respect of Right to Buy buy-backs equates to £0.532m due to assessment of properties, meaning that suitable properties that benefit Dacorum have not been identified.

Housing Development sites have had budget bought forward at the end of the year due to progress being further ahead in respect of Marchmont Fields site.

An underspend of £0.223m is reported for the HRA, this is as a result of the gainshare agreement with the main contractor.

7.4 Supplementary Capital Budget Requests

Cabinet will be asked to recommend to Council to approve the following supplementary budget requests for Housing and Community services relating to 2023/24:

- Local Authority Housing Fund £0.452m. This is grant funding for 40% spend of the project. The remaining 60% is funded from existing capital budgets.
- Affordable Housing Development fund £0.317m. This is to reflect previously approved contributions to third parties to develop affordable housing in the borough. The budget is funded from Council 141 Right to Buy receipts.

Cabinet will be asked to recommend to Council to approve the following supplementary budget requests for Housing and Community services relating to 2024/25:

- Local Authority Housing Fund £0.0398m. This is grant funding for 40% spend of the project. The remaining 60% is funded from existing capital budgets.

7.5 Capital Budget Virement

Cabinet will be asked to approve the following budget virement requests relating to 2024/25:

Asset Management service

Planned Expenditure	reduction of £3.665m
DBC Commissioned Capital Works	reduction of £5.476m
Special Projects	increase of £0.387m

Safe Homes service

M&E Contracted Works	increase of £2.540m
Communal Gas & Heating	increase of £3.010m
Social Housing Development Fund	increase of £3.054m
Local Authority Housing Fund	increase of £0.150m

8. Financial implications

8.1 Contained within the body of this report.

9. Legal implications

9.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

10. Risk implications

10.1 Regular monitoring and reporting on the Council's financial position is one of the key ways in which the organisation manages the potential risk of the weakening of its financial resilience.

11 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights

11.1 Community Impact Assessments on Council activities are carried out by relevant services with responsibility for those activities. A separate Community Impact Assessment has not been carried out in respect of this report.

11.2 There are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

12 Sustainability implications

12.1 There are no specific sustainability implications arising from this report.

13 Council infrastructure

13.1 The content of this report sets out the implications of the Council's activities for its financial resources for 2023/24.

14 Conclusions

14.1 The position for 2023/24 is a surplus of £0.459m against Council General Fund budgets, of which a surplus of £0.294m relates to Housing and Community services. Housing Revenue Account budgets are reporting a residual pressure of £0.294m.

14.2 A position for 2023/24 at quarter 4 is slippage of £0.300m for Housing and Community General Fund capital schemes and £7.138m for Housing Revenue Account capital schemes.



Dacorum Borough Council
Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for March 2024

Cost of Services
Finance and Resources
Housing and Community
Strategic Planning and Environment
Net Cost of Services
Other Items
Investment Income
Interest Payments and Minimum Revenue Provision
Parish Precept Payments
Government Grants
Taxation (Council Tax and Business Rates)
Surplus / Deficit on Provision of Services
Transfers between Reserves / Funds
Net Recharge to the HRA
Net Movement on General Fund Working Balance

<i>Full Year</i>		
Budget £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Variance £000
9,767	11,718	1,951
1,976	1,674	(302)
12,049	13,968	1,919
23,792	27,360	3,568
(755)	(4,259)	(3,504)
741	546	(195)
1,234	1,234	0
(1,693)	(6,908)	(5,215)
(17,641)	(12,707)	4,934
(18,114)	(22,094)	(3,980)
(5,678)	(5,755)	(77)
0	(489)	(489)



Housing Revenue Account

2023/24 Outturn Revenue Budget Monitoring Report

	Budget £000	Outturn £000	Variance £000	%
Income:				
Dwelling Rents	(60,868)	(61,824)	(956)	1.6%
Non-Dwelling Rents	(104)	(98)	6	-5.8%
Tenants Charges	(1,504)	(1,602)	(98)	6.5%
Leaseholder Charges	(606)	(632)	(26)	4.3%
Interest and Investment Income	(210)	(1,985)	(1,775)	845.2%
Contribution towards Expenditure	(647)	(1,164)	(517)	79.9%
Total Income	(63,939)	(67,305)	(3,366)	5.3%
Expenditure:				
Repairs & Maintenance	14,594	19,877	5,283	36.2%
Supervision & Management	18,421	20,296	1,875	10.2%
Rent, Rates, Taxes & Other Charges	178	127	(51)	-28.7%
Interest Payable	11,267	11,266	(1)	0.0%
Provision for Bad Debts	750	568	(182)	-24.3%
Depreciation	15,620	15,532	(88)	-0.6%
HRA Democratic Recharges	406	418	12	3.0%
Revenue Contribution to Capital	2,538	0	(2,538)	-100.0%
Total Expenditure	63,774	68,084	4,310	6.8%
Service Total	(165)	779	944	
Provision release	0	(650)	(650)	0.0%
HRA Deficit / (Surplus) Before Reserves	(165)	129	294	
Transfer to / (from) Housing Reserves (Working Balance)	165	165	0	0.0%
Transfer to / (from) Housing Reserves (Other)	0	(294)	(294)	0.0%
HRA Deficit / (Surplus)	0	0	0	0.0%
Housing Revenue Account Working Balance:				
Opening Balance at 1 April 2023	(2,892)	(2,892)	0	0.0%
Deficit / (Surplus) for year	(165)	(165)	0	0.0%
Closing Balance at 31 March 2024	(3,057)	(3,057)	0	



HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Consumer Standards Housing Service Self-Assessment & External Validation
Date:	15 th July 2024
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix A – DBC Housing Self-Assessment & Improvement Plan -Consumer Standards Appendix B – Altair review of self assesment
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	DBC – Dacorum Borough Council SQA Team – Strategy, Quality & Assurance TSM’s – Tenant Satisfaction Measures RSH – Regulator of Social Housing

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Simon Walton, Head of Strategy, Quality & Assurance



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on behalf of:

Natasha Beresford, Assistant Director, Housing Operations & Safe Communities

Mark Pinnell, (Interim) Assistant Director, Property

David Barrett, Assistant Director, Strategic Housing & Delivery

Corporate Priorities	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
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	Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
Wards affected	All
Purpose of the report:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide H&COSC with an overview of the work of the housing service to demonstrate compliance with the Consumer Standards 2. To present the quality assurance and external validation work commissioned by the housing service, carried out by Altair
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	<p>That OSC to consider the report and assurance work from Altair.</p> <p>To sign off the self-assessment, receive and monitor progress on action to develop the areas identified as partially compliant. Follow up will be in 6 month time.</p>
Period for post policy/project review:	October 2024

Introduction/Background

Since their introduction in 2010, the government has had long-standing plans to increase what is known as consumer regulation in the social housing sector. This means the powers of the regulator to oversee the services provided to residents and intervene if they are not good enough.

On the 29 February 2024 as a result of the landmark [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act](#) – which has introduced a series of actions to ensure that tenants in social housing are listened to, live in good quality housing and have access to help when things go wrong. The Regulator of Social Housing has because of the new Act set out its new standards for social housing landlords, designed to protect tenants and improve the service they receive. The regulator has also confirmed how it will regulate landlords against these standards.

The new housing consumer standards will inform the framework of a new programme of cyclical inspections.

The changes, came into effect from 1 April 2024. They will apply to all social landlords, including councils and housing associations.

Under the new standards landlords will need to:

- ensure tenants are safe in their homes
- listen to tenants' complaints and respond promptly to put things right
- be accountable to tenants and treat them with fairness and respect
- know more about the condition of every home and the needs of the people who live in them
- collect and use data effectively across a range of areas, including repairs

The above will be measured through four new consumer standards, which are:

1. The Safety and Quality Homes standard
2. The Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard
3. The Neighbourhood and Community standard
4. The Tenancy standard.

Most social housing tenants live in decent homes, however the new legislation gives the regulator increased powers, when there are problems. The regulator can use a range of tools when needed. To hold landlords to account, it will:

- Inspect larger landlords regularly to check they are meeting the outcomes in the standards – these inspections will take place at least once every 4 years.
- Scrutinise data about tenant satisfaction, repairs and other relevant issues – through annual reporting of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Continue to push landlords to protect tenants and put things right through its enforcement powers

From 1 April, the RSH will inspect large landlords, with 1,000 or more social homes at least once every four years to ensure they are meeting the consumer standards.

Regulator of social housing – Dacorum Housing Service Inspection

Dacorum Borough Council are among the first group of Local Authorities to be inspected by the regulator, the inspection is part of the regular rolling programme, rather than being an identified risk.

The inspectors have completed their desk top review based on a data and evidence submission, and visited on-site visit on the 22nd and 23rd May, to carry out interviews with key members of the service, Housing & Property Services Portfolio Holder, Leader and Chief Executive.

- Following the programmed inspection, the RSH will publish a regulatory judgement and grade for Dacorum. The grading decision is expected 6-12 weeks following the on-site visit.
- The table below shows the potential grades:

Grading	Grading Description
C1	The RSH judgement is that overall the landlord is delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord has demonstrated that it identifies when issues occur and puts plans in place to remedy and minimise recurrence
C2	The RSH judgement is that there are some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed
C3	The RSH judgement is that there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed
C4	The RSH judgement is that there are very serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord must make fundamental changes so that improved outcomes are delivered

Housing Service Preparation for Regulation

In the autumn of 2023 the housing service started a project to ensure that the service was prepared and ready for the emerging regulation. The service undertook a self-assessment exercise against the (at that time) proposed consumer standards. The self-assessment allowed the service to map all best practice, data and documents which could be used as supporting evidence for the regulator to demonstrate the services compliance with the new consumer standards.

The self-assessment also identified any gaps or areas where improvements could be made. Individual services developed improvement plans and aligned their annual service plans with the consumer standards to ensure that the direction of travel was aligned with the standards.

All policies, strategies and key documents have also been aligned with the standards to ensure that the consumer standards are a golden thread through services.

A copy of the consumer standards self-assessment is at **appendix A**.

External validation from Altair – regulatory support project

In late 2023 the service commissioned external consultants, Altair to carry out a review of the self-assessment and provide quality assurance, through a regulatory support project.

Key objectives for the regulatory support project:

Complete a detailed review completed against the consumer standards to ensure the self-assessment is robust and meets the RSH requirements.

Review the approach to the self-assessment, to ensure its appropriate, proportionate and meets the expectations of the RSH and to provide foresight for future potential reporting issues.

Complete a deep dive review of the source documentation as part of the self-assessment, based on any key risks identified by DBC through the self-assessment.

Key deliverables:

- Critical friend support
- External validation and quality assurance

Current position

- Altair completed their review of the self-assessment and supporting documents/data by the end of April, they have provided feedback, additional comments and requested additional information on some areas.
- Assistant Directors and Heads of Service have reviewed these comments and provided additional information requested.
- Final review report from Altair is at **Appendix B**.

Next steps

The Consumer Standards self-assessment will form a vital part of the evidence for the regulator as part of their current inspection of Dacorum. When the final judgement of the regulator is made following the inspection the OSC will be fully informed of the outcome.

The OSC will also be briefed on any arising plans developed following the inspection judgement and feedback. The resulting plan will form part of the service's continuous service improvement and will ensure that we continue to deliver excellent customer focused services to our tenants.



SELF ASSESSMENT: Dacorum Borough Council compliance with the proposed NEW Consumer Standards – Final standards due to be published April 2024.

Background:

Regulating the new consumer standards - All landlords must meet the Regulator of Social Housing standards – [Economic and consumer regulatory standards](#). These standards are under review as part of the Social housing regulation act. The final reviewed standards are due to be published by the regulator in April 2024.

To prepare for the introduction of the new standards, this documents outlines our current compliance with the proposed NEW consumer standards.

Index:

[Safety and Quality Standard](#)

[1.1 Stock quality](#)

[1.2 Decency](#)

[1.3 Health and safety](#)

[1.4 Repairs, maintenance and planned improvements](#)

[1.5 Adaptations](#)

[Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard](#)

[1.1 Fairness and respect](#)

[1.2 Diverse needs](#)

[1.3 Engagement with tenants](#)

[1.4 Information about landlord services](#)

[1.5 Performance information](#)

[1.6 Complaints](#)

[Neighbourhood and Community Standard](#)

[1.1 Maintenance of shared spaces](#)

[1.2 Local cooperation](#)

[1.3 Safer neighbourhoods](#)

[1.4 Domestic abuse](#)

[Tenancy Standard](#)

[1.1 Allocations and lettings](#)

[1.2 Tenancy sustainment and evictions](#)

[1.3 Tenure](#)

[1.4 Mutual exchange](#)

[Appendix 1 – Improvement plan](#)

[Appendix 2 – Index of important documents](#)

The regulatory standard	Compliance (Y/N/P) Comments and evidence
Safety and Quality Standard	
Code of practice:	
Stock Quality Providing safe and well-maintained homes is a fundamental responsibility of all registered providers. Having a sufficiently detailed understanding of the condition of their homes at an individual property level is vital to providers being able to achieve this and helps to ensure that they comply with all applicable requirements. In achieving this outcome, private registered providers should be mindful of the regulator’s requirement in the Governance and Financial Viability standard in relation to maintaining a thorough, accurate and up to date record of their assets and liabilities. Registered providers are expected to undertake regular physical assessments of both the inside and the outside of all their homes. They should assess whether their homes are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• safe and free from serious hazards• kept in good repair• meet relevant standards prescribed in law. Registered providers should survey homes frequently enough and in sufficient depth to maintain their assurance on the quality and safety of their stock. Appropriate frequency and depth will be influenced by a range of factors, including but not limited to, property age, construction, and archetypes as well as data from complaints and reports from repairs and maintenance programmes. For some registered providers, a five-year rolling programme of stock condition surveys across all homes might be appropriate, however for some providers or for some of their stock, more frequent assessments might be needed, for example where there are high levels of responsive repair requests or recurring problems which might be indicative of wider issues.	

Registered providers should ensure that they not only have a robust approach to assessing and recording the conditions of their homes, but they should also use information from other sources such as complaints to ensure they have a rounded view of the condition of their stock and the needs of individual tenants living in those homes. Where investment and repair requirements are identified, registered providers should have appropriate systems in place to ensure they are acted upon in an appropriate and timely manner.

Decency

(Relevant to required outcome 1.2.1)

13 - Registered providers are required to comply with section 5 of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance, and should have an approach to repairs, maintenance and planned improvements which ensures that their homes are maintained to meet all criteria of the Decent Homes Standard, including being free from Category 1 hazards.

14 - Registered providers' understanding of the condition of their homes should include compliance against all criteria of the Decent Homes Standard. In addition, registered providers should have an effective plan in place to ensure compliance with all criteria of the Decent Homes Standard is maintained.

15 - Where a registered provider has agreed a period of non-compliance with the Decent Homes Standard with the regulator, it should ensure that it meets all applicable health and safety legal requirements for the duration of the period and should communicate the non-compliance with the Decent Homes Standard and its implications to affected tenants.

Health and safety

(Relevant to required outcome 1.3.1 and specific expectations 2.2.1 and 2.2.3)

16 - As part of achieving this outcome, registered providers must ensure they understand and comply with all applicable health and safety legal requirements, including secondary legislation (in relation to, for example, gas safety, fire safety, electrical safety, water safety, lift safety, asbestos safety, smoke alarms and carbon monoxide). In ensuring compliance, registered providers are expected to have regard to appropriate statutory guidance and to meet the legal requirements relating to the role of the health and safety lead.

17 - Registered providers should ensure that they maintain sufficient assurance that they meet all relevant health and safety requirements, which reflects the level of potential risk and impact on tenants. They should have a full understanding of what the data is telling them about how safe tenants are, the effectiveness of controls in place and how tenants' needs are being met.

18 - As part of ensuring the wider safety of tenants in the design and delivery of landlord services, registered providers should have an effective approach to proactively identifying the risks to tenants' safety and eliminating or mitigating those risks. Examples of actions that providers may take to ensure the safety of tenants include, housing tenants together appropriately when allocating shared properties, assessing the vulnerability and risk of antisocial behaviour victims in considering what action to take, and taking into account individual tenants' safety, security and health when prioritising repairs.

Repairs, maintenance and planned improvements

(Relevant to required outcome 1.4.1 and specific expectations 2.3.3,2.3.4 and 2.3.5)

19 - Registered providers are expected to have in place and comply with effective policies, procedures and processes in relation to repairs, maintenance and planned improvements that take into account tenants' views and diverse needs. This may include, for example, increasing the priority of repairs for some older tenants and where a household member is disabled, and installing extra locks and security lights for tenants experiencing domestic abuse or anti-social behaviour, in order to safeguard them.

20 - Registered providers should communicate promptly with tenants about repairs, maintenance and planned improvements and keep them regularly updated on progress and how they are resolving any issues. For example, they should aim to consult affected tenants in a timely manner before the start of any planned improvement programmes, and update affected tenants if providers foresee any delays to the programme. In doing so, they should be mindful of the regulator's requirements in relation to the diverse needs of tenants.

21 - In relation to communal areas, where there is an arrangement in place for a third party to manage a communal area on a registered provider's behalf, the registered provider is required to ensure that the communal area is well-maintained, and to hold the third party to account if it is not.

Adaptations

(Relevant to required outcome 1.5.1 and specific expectation 2.4.1 and 2.4.2)

22 - Not all registered providers directly provide a housing adaptations service, but nonetheless they should all have a process in place to assist tenants in need of housing adaptations, which they must communicate to tenants. As part of this communication, registered providers are expected to inform tenants about the application process, and where relevant, providers should make clear any local variations to the application process that may apply. Assistance to tenants requiring a housing adaptation may take the form of, for example, providers applying for an adaptation to the relevant organisation on a tenant's behalf or establishing clear timescales with the relevant organisation providing the adaptation.

23 - Where the housing adaptations service is provided by a third party, the registered provider should not unreasonably withhold permission for a housing adaptation to be installed in a tenant's home. Where the registered provider provides a housing adaptations service, they should not unreasonably refuse a tenant's request for a housing adaptation. Where a registered provider does not meet a tenant's request for a housing adaptation, the provider should consider whether it is appropriate to offer alternative measures in order to support the affected tenant.

1. Required outcomes

1.1 Stock quality

1.1.1 Registered providers must have an accurate, up-to-date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes that reliably informs their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants [\[footnote 1\]](#).

1.2 Decency

<p>1.2.1 Registered providers must ensure that tenants’ homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government’s Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard unless exempted by the regulator ~.</p> <p>1.3 Health and safety</p> <p>1.3.1 When acting as landlords, registered providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.</p> <p>1.4 Repairs, maintenance and planned improvements</p> <p>1.4.1 Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.</p> <p>1.5 Adaptations</p> <p>1.5.1 Registered providers must assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services.</p>	
<p>Specific Expectations</p>	
<p>2.1 Stock quality</p>	
<p>2.1.1 Registered providers must have an accurate record at an individual property level of the condition of their stock, based on a physical assessment of all homes and keep this up-to-date.</p>	<p>Y – Stock condition surveys were last undertaken 10 years ago. To update records and to provide an ongoing commitment to stay abreast of investment need over the last 2 years DBC have completed 4000 stock condition surveys covering all construction archetypes. This data has then been cloned to provide an indicative view of the entire housing stock portfolio. There is a rolling stock condition survey programme with the target of completing circa 2000 surveys per annum, which provides 100% property surveys (10,000) every 5 years. The first year we will have 100% complete in line with this rolling programme will be 2028 reducing reliance on cloned data year on year.</p> <p>The data captured is uploaded in to the Asset Management Performance Model known as ASAP. This tool provides a view of property performance and includes both financial and non-financial metrics. The outcomes will inform both investment and disinvestment priorities.</p>
<p>2.1.2 Registered providers must use data from across their records on stock condition to inform their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Compliance with health and safety legal requirements b) Compliance with the Decent Homes Standard c) Delivery of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to stock 	<p>Y – All Decent Homes failures identified through stock condition surveys are reviewed to assess the best way to achieve Decent Homes standard for each property and inform investment work stream planning.</p> <p>In addition to the use of the ASAP tool to allow us to continually monitor Decent Homes compliance, we are undertaking a project to transfer our stock condition survey data into the Housing asset management software system ‘MRI Asset’ Monthly Decent Homes compliance reports will be in place from February 2024 and by 2027/28 we have a full set of survey data for every home and can ensure accurate reporting on an ongoing basis.</p>

<p>d) Allocating homes with adaptations appropriately</p>	<p>The programme of stock condition surveys has informed the prioritisation of the planned programme and the investment need aligned with the HRA business plan from 2024/25.</p> <p>Monthly reporting of the 'Big 7' 6 Compliance areas plus Damp and Mould has been embedded and provides oversight at both strategic and operational level. Repairs are generally reported by residents, however if repairs are identified via stock condition surveys, they are reported back to the repairs team. Stock condition data will be used to inform and determine our planned maintenance programmes from April 2024</p> <p>Customers with a requirement for an adapted property are registered on a direct offers list, when a property becomes void, this is checked against the direct offers list to determine if there is anyone suitable for the void property, or if the property could be adapted to meet the customer's needs.</p> <p>Where a home doesn't have an existing adaptation, homes are assessed to see if they can be adapted to meet the requirement of an applicant or resident inline with the Occupational Therapist (OT) recommendation. Where this happens a survey and OT may visit to assess suitability. This is referenced in the allocations policy</p>
<p>2.2 Health and safety</p>	
<p>2.2.1 Registered providers must identify and meet all legal requirements that relate to the health and safety of tenants in their homes and communal areas.</p>	<p>Y – DBC has a dedicated Health and Safety board which oversees compliance to all legal requirements including those relating to our Tenants and their homes. The last meeting was held on the 16th Nov 23 and is Chaired by Aiden Wilkie.</p> <p>In addition from January 2024 all heads of service will complete a quarterly health and safety report. Service managers complete service based risk assessments and business continuity plans (Managed by Mary Flemming)</p> <p>Estate inspection programme is in place. A tracker is kept of reported issues and actions (Maintained by Ryan Glanville)</p> <p>Compliance reports are provided to SLT, along with a quarterly dashboard report on safeguarding (Available in SLT papers)</p>
<p>2.2.2 Registered providers must ensure that all required actions arising from legally required health and safety assessments are carried out within appropriate timescales.</p>	<p>Y – DBC has a suite of corporate risk assessments for all key areas of its functions both employer and landlord. These are managed through the meetings in 2.2.1. In addition any actions arising from health & Safety inspections and assessments are managed through an appropriate action plan.</p>

	<p>All property compliance is reported monthly via the compliance tracker. (Evidence contained in compliance tracker). Internal Audit regime in place.</p> <p>Direct at risk registers, including operational and strategic updating and kept on Inphase (link was in HSLT minutes from last week)</p>
<p>2.2.3 Registered providers must ensure that the safety of tenants is considered in the design and delivery of landlord services and take reasonable steps to mitigate any identified risks to tenants.</p>	<p>Y –DBC provide Lifeline support via Tunstall alarms for the most vulnerable and those in SH. Resident engagement strategies linked to the building safety act - We have completed an on site resident engagement events and co-developed hard copy resident engagement strategies, which are being supported by online engagement areas for each block in scope. Part of this process has been to capture self-referred vulnerabilities which is key information to help assist Fire and Rescue Services should an evacuation be required.</p> <p>DBC have a Building and Resident Safety Group chaired by the Assistant Director of Property and attended by senior service leads. The purpose of the group is to focus on all aspects of keeping our residents safe and not just focussed on legislative requirements.</p> <p>All estates receive regular estate inspections, picking up issues and concerns in communal areas. The cleaning service ensure compliance with COSHH when working in communal areas, and report any health and safety concerns on their rounds. Our estate maintenance service, Clean, Safe and Green have robust policy and procedures to ensure safety of both employees and residents. Contractors have mechanisms in place to report back on health & safety and safeguarding concerns.</p> <p>New ASB risk assessment has been embedded into the reporting process, this is best practice over and above legislative requirement.</p> <p>Regular review of the tenancy agreement take place, taking into consideration new and changing legislation, examples are clear landings, pet policy, fire safety, decant policy and Domestic abuse, and fire safety.</p>
<p>2.3 Repairs, maintenance and planned improvements</p>	
<p>2.3.1 Registered providers must enable repairs and maintenance issues to be reported easily.</p>	<p>Y – Tenants can report repair and maintenance issues via a dedicated call centre, provided by our total asset management contractor Osborne. Issues can also be reported online on the website and in person at our reception in our main building The Forum. An emergency out of hours service is provided to provide a 24/7 support service.</p>

	<p>My Dacorum portal (via www.dacorum.com) enables residents to report repairs and upload photos to enable easy diagnosis. Repairs are also reportable via supported housing officers. Heads of monitor all reports from staff to make sure that they are being progressed and completed.</p> <p>Emergency out of hours available 24hrs managed via Osbornes, with a dedicated DBC Officer providing OOH support. Together with a 24hr surveyor for emergency response.</p> <p>CCTV control centre offers an out of hours service, members can contact with any emergency concerns.</p>
<p>2.3.2 Registered providers must set timescales for the completion of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements, clearly communicate them to tenants and take appropriate steps to deliver to them.</p>	<p>Y – Service standards and timescales for repairs are set out in our repairs handbook which is available on the website, there is also information in the Tenants handbook provided to each tenant at sign up, and also online.</p> <p>Performance KPI's are report and monitored through the contract management of the current Total Asset Management contract. The Osborne contact centre will provide an appointment at the point of report where possible. Where appointments cannot be confirmed at the time the repair is reported (where a specialist contractor is needed), the customer will be contacted to agree a convenient date and time by the relevant contractor.</p> <p>Performance is reported to residents annually through the annual report to residents.</p>
<p>2.3.3 Registered providers must keep tenants informed about repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to their homes with clear and timely communication.</p>	<p>Y – Full consultation takes place prior to planned works, including where possible Resident involvement in the choice of colours or finish.</p> <p>Timescales for responsive repairs are provided to Tenants when they report the repair, text message updates are also provided on the day of the repair. If follow up works are required an additional appointment where possible would be agreed on site with the customer if this is not possible the customer will be contacted to advise of a new appointment.</p> <p>Section 20 consultation process is followed for Leaseholders, to ensure consultation in a legally compliant format on cost, timescales etc. is provided before any tender work. This is also shared with Tenants in the block to inform them of the process and timescales for procurement and works to start.</p>
<p>2.3.4 Registered providers must understand and fulfil their maintenance responsibilities in respect of communal areas.</p>	<p>Y – A programme of regular estate inspections carried out by the Tenancy team picks up on communal repairs. Tenants are also encouraged to report any repairs in communal areas.</p>

	<p>We also encourage our Tenants to volunteer as Block Champions, this is a scheme where they complete regular inspections and report any issues back to us to resolve.</p>
<p>2.3.5 Registered providers must ensure that the delivery of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to homes and communal areas is informed by the needs of tenants and provides value for money, in addition to the requirement at 2.1.2</p>	<p>Y – DBC are currently in the process of procuring its repairs contract, the requirements of this are being discussed at our Tenant and Leaseholder Committee. We will embed residents in procurement process. Resident’s data is being used to understand tenant’s requirements, to help ensure that the new service provider can meet expectations of residents.</p> <p>Visiting Officers and cleaning team/operatives are encouraged to report any issues.</p> <p>Annual value for money assessment is completed by Grant Thornton (external auditors) annually corporately. The housing and property service input into that. The 2024-2025 is starting Jan 2024</p> <p>When projects and improvements are procured this is reported through to the commercial board and OSC to ensure VFM.</p>
<p>2.4 Adaptations</p>	
<p>2.4.1 Registered providers must clearly communicate to tenants and relevant organisations how they will assist tenants seeking housing adaptations services.</p>	<p>Y – Information about our Housing adaptations service is available on our website. We also have a dedicated team who Tenants can speak to and who can advise Tenants, liaise with partners and lead on the delivery of adaptations. New applications for adaptations are submitted via Adult Care Services at Herts County Council (HCC), with a OT assessment and recommendations for the adaptation required. This is reviewed to determine if the adaptations are suitable/possible.</p> <p>Where there are concerns for a Tenant who is struggling to manage in their home, we would hold a multi-disciplinary meeting and may refer to tenancy sustainment.</p>
<p>2.4.2 Registered providers must co-operate with tenants, appropriate local authority departments and other relevant organisations so that a housing adaptations service is provided to tenants.</p>	<p>Y - We have a dedicated team who deliver our housing adaptations service. They are able to speak to and advise Tenants, liaise with partners to progress works and lead on the physical delivery of adaptations, working with Osborne and other contractors.</p> <p>Satisfaction with the adaptations service is monitored through satisfaction surveys which feeds into our Tenant’s Voice piece and feeds into continuous service improvement.</p>

	When new build schemes are commissioned all properties are built to lifetime homes standard, with an additional 10-12% of properties are delivered to M43B. Through the RP Forum we are encouraging local social housing providers to do the same.
Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard	
Code of practice:	

Fairness and respect

(Relevant to required outcome 1.1.1)

24 - All tenants deserve to be treated with fairness and respect and this principle should underpin how registered providers deliver all landlord services. Registered providers should foster a strong culture throughout their organisation of fairness, courtesy and respect, where tenants are listened to and can trust their landlord. In treating tenants fairly, providers should consider how they can adapt their services and communications to meet individual tenants' needs.

Diverse needs

(Relevant to required outcome 1.2.1 and specific expectations 2.1.1., 2.1.2, 2.1.3 and 2.1.4)

25 - Registered providers are expected to consider the diverse needs of their tenants across all landlord services and housing. It should be integral to the culture of the organisation. Examples of how providers can ensure fair access for tenants to landlord services may include, investigating any complaints of alleged discrimination from tenants promptly and implementing any relevant learning, providing regular equality, diversity & inclusion training for staff, board or councillors, and carrying out work to understand the barriers different groups of tenants might face in accessing services and working to remove those barriers.

26 - Registered providers are expected to have robust information about their tenants and keep this information up to date. This should include, but not be limited to, in relation to the protected characteristics, and their support and communication needs. It is for registered providers to work with tenants to decide the most effective approach to gathering this information and keeping it up to date, and to share with tenants how they make use of the data to improve and tailor services. Some providers may gather this information via periodic face-to-face contact with tenants, for example, while others may decide to use all points of contact with tenants to request the information, where appropriate. Registered providers should explore a range of different solutions to ensure they maximise the response rate for collecting this information from tenants.

27 - As part of achieving this outcome, registered providers should also use relevant information about their tenant base as a whole, in addition to information about individual tenants, to inform the design and delivery of their strategies, policies and landlord services.

28 - Registered providers should regularly assess whether all tenants have fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services. Providers should take account of the findings of their assessments and should be able to demonstrate actions they have taken as a result.

29 - Registered providers should make tenants aware of the different ways in which services are tailored to meet their needs. This could include, for example, by informing tenants when they report a repair that a choice of appointment time is available, or that information can be supplied in alternative formats such as pictorial and in different languages on request.

30 - Registered providers should have in place an effective, simple and accessible process to enable tenants and prospective tenants to nominate a representative to act on their behalf in interactions with the landlord about landlord services, for example, in order to report a complaint on a tenant's behalf and to discuss progress of a repair or a housing application.

Engagement with tenants

(Relevant to required outcome 1.3.1 and specific expectations 2.2.1, 2.2.2., 2.2.3, 2.2.4, 2.2.5 and 2.2.6)

31 - Genuine consideration of tenants' views should be at the heart of registered providers' different levels of decision-making about the delivery of landlord services. Boards and councillors of registered providers should assure themselves that tenants' views have been actively sought and considered, as part of their decision-making about their organisation's landlord services. This may include, for example, in relation to agreeing their asset management strategy, the setting of service standards, agreeing responsive repair timescales and setting performance targets for different landlord services. In addition, consideration of how to improve and tailor landlord service delivery should be an ongoing activity taking place at all levels of the organisation and across all areas of service delivery.

32 - Registered providers should take reasonable steps to ensure that all tenants have an equitable opportunity to be involved in influencing and scrutinising strategies, policies and services, taking into account the diverse needs of tenants.

33 - Assistance that registered providers offer to tenants wishing to implement tenant-led activities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services may include, for example, providing venues for meetings, administrative support, funding and training.

34 - Where a registered provider is considering a change in landlord or a significant change in management arrangements, it is important that in their consultation with affected tenants they tailor their communication methods and take all reasonable steps to ensure that all affected tenants have access to and can understand the landlord's proposals. This should include tenants who may experience communication barriers, have additional support needs and are unable to use online services.

35 - Consultation with tenants must be meaningful, which includes engaging with affected tenants in a range of ways. Providers should begin their consultation with affected tenants at an early stage in the process, whilst there is scope to influence the decision and/or outcome, and should run the consultation for a sufficient amount of time to give affected tenants an equitable opportunity to consider and respond to the proposals. Registered providers should make clear any potential material impacts, positive and negative, of the proposed changes, for example, any impact on rent and service charge levels, service delivery or security of tenure. They should also set out clearly the main reasons for the changes being proposed to affected tenants. Board and councillors of registered providers should assure themselves that feedback from affected tenants has been genuinely considered in their decision-making about proposals, and the provider should demonstrate this to affected tenants.

Information about landlord services

36 - Effective communication with tenants and the provision of clear and accessible information is at the heart of an effective tenant/landlord relationship. Registered providers should make tenants aware of the services and standards of service they provide, and the different ways in which tenants can contact their landlord.

37 - Where registered providers are delivering a service directly to a tenant, they should communicate with them from the start through to the completion of that service. For example, where a tenant reports a repair to their landlord, the registered provider should keep them updated about progress of the repair on a regular and ongoing basis, particularly where there is going to be a delay in carrying out the repair, or where multiple trades and visits are required.

38 - The expectation that registered providers must make information available to tenants about the relevant roles and responsibilities of senior level employees or officers applies to all registered providers, whether they employ paid staff or not.

Performance information

(Relevant to required outcome 1.5.1 and specific expectations 2.4.2b, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4.a, 2.4.4.b and 2.4.4.d)

39 - Tenants having access to reliable and accurate performance information about landlord services helps to ensure transparency and to drive effective tenant scrutiny.

40 - In addition to complying with the regulator's requirement to publish their performance against the tenant satisfaction measures in a form required by the regulator; registered providers should, following engagement with their tenants, also consider publishing some or all TSM data at a more granular level and/or on a more frequent basis, in order to support tenant scrutiny. For example, they may report some or all TSM data separately for:

- Entities within their group and/or
- Specific property types such as general needs or housing for older people and/or
- Different geographical areas
- Specific tenant groups (relevant to the TSM tenant perception measures: TP01-TP12) such as tenants who share different protected characteristics.

41 - Where a registered provider publishes TSM data in more detail as set out in paragraph 39, they should ensure, as far as possible, that they calculate and report the data in accordance with the regulator's TSM requirements. Any significant deviation from these requirements should be clearly set out alongside the reported TSM data.

42 - It is important that tenants and other stakeholders are able to trust what TSM data tells them about landlords' performance. Registered providers should ensure they have adequate assurance that they comply with the regulator's TSM requirements.

43 - Registered providers should be able to demonstrate that they understand their performance, including where and why performance has changed over time. They should have clear and measurable plans in place to improve performance where required, and should be able to demonstrate that they are effectively delivering to those plans. When providing performance information, registered providers should consider how they can support tenants to understand the information being presented, including relevant performance improvement plans, for example, by including contextual and benchmarking information.

44 - In providing information about how they have taken tenants' views into account, registered providers should be able to demonstrate any changes they have made to landlord services as a result of insight from tenants' views, including learning from complaints.

45 - In providing information to tenants on directors' remuneration and management costs, registered providers should consider the [regulator's note on how to calculate these costs](#).

Complaints

(Relevant to required outcome 1.6.1 and specific expectations 2.5.1, 2.5.2 and 2.5.3)

46 - Addressing complaints fairly, effectively and promptly is essential for providers to build trust with tenants. Providers should make every effort to ensure that tenants are aware of their complaints process. Tenants should be able to raise a complaint easily and should be listened to by their landlord when they do so.

47 - In addressing complaints, registered providers should ensure that they provide regular updates to affected tenants about the progress they have made to resolve the complaint fairly and the next steps they plan to take, with clear timescales.

48 - In meeting this outcome, registered providers are expected to consider relevant requirements of other bodies, including those of the Housing Ombudsman and specifically their Complaint Handling Code.

49 - Complaints present registered providers with valuable insight into tenants' experiences of interacting with their landlord. Registered providers should make good use of this learning in order to improve services for tenants, bringing about change at a service or organisational level where appropriate. As part of this learning, registered providers should analyse trends and themes from complaints data.

Self-referral

(Relevant to specific expectation 2.6.1)

50 - The regulator requires registered providers to tell it at the earliest opportunity about any material issues that indicate there has been or may be a breach of the Standards. This transparency is an essential part of providers meeting their co-regulatory responsibilities. If a registered provider is unsure as to whether an issue is material, they should contact the regulator to discuss the matter further.

Required outcomes

1.1 Fairness and respect

1.1.1 Registered providers must treat all tenants [\[footnote 2\]](#) with fairness and respect.

1.2 Diverse needs

1.2.1 Registered providers must take action to deliver fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services for all tenants.

1.3 Engagement with tenants

1.3.1 Registered providers must take tenants' views into account in their decision-making about how landlord services are delivered.~

1.4 Information about landlord services

1.4.1 Registered providers must communicate with tenants and provide information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account.

1.5 Performance information

1.5.1 Registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in delivering landlord services.

1.6 Complaints

1.6.1 Registered providers must ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly.

Specific expectations	
2.1 Diverse needs:	
<p>2.1.1 Registered providers must use relevant information and data to:</p> <p>a) understand the diverse needs of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs; and</p> <p>b) assess whether all tenants have fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services.</p>	<p>Y – We record demographic data about our Tenants and service users on our housing IT systems. Our dedicated Tenancy Sustainment team use this data to support our Tenants with additional support needs. Recently we have developed a new ‘voice of the tenant’ report which pulls together all customer feedback and feeds into our service improvement plan. We are also monitoring the TSM data on a quarterly basis to embed the feedback into our service improvement plans.</p> <p>All new policies and strategies have supporting community impact assessments. Senior Officers in housing are part of an EDI project group.</p> <p>All corporate reports which go through cabinet and OSC need to evidence that we have considered EDI and human rights.</p> <p>Hearing loop available in the Forum for all visits, and rooms have dimmable lighting for people with neurodiversity.</p> <p>Humanitarian response team provide tailored support to refugees and asylum seekers.</p>
<p>2.1.2 Registered providers must ensure that communication with and information for tenants is clear, accessible, relevant, timely and appropriate to the diverse needs of tenants.</p>	<p>Y – We provide all our housing information in multiple formats upon request. Web based contents is compatible with assistive technology. We have staff within the service who are trained in British sign language, as well as many different language speakers. We are developing our online self-service offer, which will mean that people can provide more information to us about their needs, to support us to tailor our services further.</p> <p>We provide an interpreting service Hertfordshire interpreting service. We develop and deliver support plans for older, and vulnerable residents.</p> <p>All new policies and strategies have supporting community impact assessments. Senior Officers in housing are part of an EDI project group.</p> <p>All corporate reports which go through cabinet and OSC need to evidence that we have considered EDI and human rights.</p>

	<p>Hearing loop available in the Forum for all visits, and rooms have dimmable lighting for people with neurodiversity.</p>
<p>2.1.3 Registered providers must ensure that landlord services are accessible, and that the accessibility is publicised to tenants. This includes supporting tenants and prospective tenants to use online landlord services if required.</p>	<p>Y – For home seekers we employ a Housing Needs support officer who is able to provide IT support to applicants that do not have access or unable to use the internet. Applicants are able to place bids for properties via the phone or by text messaged. Supported Housing applicants can sign up to a weekly newsletter where they are provided with the properties that are currently being advertised.</p> <p>Our customer service unit is also accessible to applicants if they have any questions or queries regarding the allocation process. Tenants are able to get face to face advice and support via our reception at the Forum and we deliver a 24/7 out of hour’s service.</p> <p>For home seekers, homeless applications and tenants home visits are carried out on requests or depending on the nature of the issue. The support is tailored to the needs of the Tenant to ensure that they get an accessible service and that we are out and about in our community.</p> <p>Scheme based older person housing have a supported housing officer on-site.</p> <p>We share accessibility and where to get the help you need on all our documents and also via our website and telephone service.</p> <p>All new policies and strategies have supporting community impact assessments. Senior Officers in housing are part of an EDI project group.</p> <p>All corporate reports which go through cabinet and OSC need to evidence that we have considered EDI and human rights.</p> <p>Hearing loop available in the Forum for all visits, and rooms have dimmable lighting for people with neurodiversity.</p>
<p>2.1.4 Registered providers must allow tenants and prospective tenants to be supported by a representative or advocate in interactions about landlord services.</p>	<p>Y – We have a procedure in place to enable Tenants and prospective Tenants to have an advocate. We also support a mediation service which Tenants can access to get support and advice.</p> <p>We also use authority to disclose forms, where residents can nominate someone to advocate on their behalf.</p>

	<p>We also proactively signpost to advocacy services, as well as providing funding for CAB to advocate on our residents. Tenancy sustainment will support their residents they support to access advocacy and support they need.</p>
<p>2.2 Engagement with tenants</p>	
<p>2.2.1 Registered providers must give tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services. This includes in relation to the neighbourhood where applicable</p>	<p>Y - We provide a wide range of engagement options including panels are open to all residents. A wider range of residents are consulted each year on ways to improve the resident involvement service at Residents Open Day, focus groups and task and finish groups. Resident Involvement Strategy was reviewed and developed with the TLC in 2020. We are currently undergoing a review of our engagement options by TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory service) the outcome of this will feed into the Resident Involvement Strategy review in 2024.</p> <p>Policies both related to the landlord service, and wider council are scrutinised at our TLC meeting regularly.</p>
<p>2.2.2 Registered providers must assist tenants who wish to implement tenant-led activities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services. This includes in relation to the neighbourhood where applicable</p>	<p>P – We are developing our Local offers and estate improvement plans to empower residents to implement tenant led scrutiny and activities. We are keen to empower our residents and have a dedicated improvement budget known as the Tenant improvement Grant (TIG)</p> <p>Supported housing forums have made recommendations to improve their local area which has been funded via a ring-fenced budget for tenant led estate improvements.</p> <p>TLC have requested and carried out scrutiny on our property services offer, community safety and the TSM data. Our involved residents were also central to the recent TPAS smart review in Winter 2023 which influenced recommendations for service improvement outlined in the outcome report.</p> <p>TPAS have been commissioned to complete a full reengineering of the tenant engagement, and scrutiny starting in February 2024.</p>
<p>2.2.3 Registered providers must provide accessible support that meets the diverse needs of tenants so they can engage with the opportunities in 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.~</p>	<p>P – We deliver resident engagement opportunities in diverse formats to encourage diversity. We have had lots of success since the Pandemic with our online Forums and Focus groups which have encouraged involvement from Tenants with caring responsibilities, from outlying areas and those with disabilities which make it challenging to attend an office/community centre based event. We also offer different levels of engagement, including light touch which encourages involvement from those who have limited time to commit.</p> <p>Let's dance sessions promoted activity and for older residents to stay well.</p>

The Tenancy sustainment team have been holding regular open sessions for their residents to gain support from Officers and peer support.

Housing open day 2023 – Engaged face to face with over 500 residents, as part of that we gained feedback and consulted on the community garden designs.

Christmas events at sheltered schemes. To promote wellbeing and tackle isolation.

Cost of living events are being held regularly to support residents and signpost to services, both in person and online.

Block safety events took place in the Autumn of 2023, to launch the resident engagement strategy documents, and promote resident safety to residents.

Damp and mould residents sessions in partnership with Bucks university took place in November 2023, to provide them with advice and support to tackle damp and mould in their properties.

Community safety survey annually along with a wider resident's survey, feeding into related service improvement work.

Customer strategy engagement and feedback sessions. The corporate team co developed our customer strategy with tenants and residents through focus groups and telephone/online system testing.

Pre-tenancy online DORIS training, there is also a resident's panel at the Elms who hold focus groups with residents of the Elms.

Residents can also submit complaints and compliments about the staff and service.

Social media we engage through our facebook, instgram and linked in.

Dacorum life hard copy newsletter goes out twice a year and monthly e-newsletter.

Consultation platform introduced – local plan and other engagement.

TPAS have been commissioned to complete a full reengineering of the tenant engagement, and scrutiny starting in February 2024.

<p>2.2.4 Registered providers must support tenants to exercise their Right to Manage, Right to Transfer or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate.</p>	<p>P – Need to develop something to outline our approach right to manage.(Brent Council may have an example)</p> <p>Through our engagement and tenant activity, we will identify opportunities for residents to provide feedback, scrutiny and management opportunity on our estates.</p> <p>Our Housing Allocations policy enables all residents to exercise their right to address their housing need through transfer requests.</p> <p>Sign up pack info and tenancy agreement clearly outlines landlord obligations and tenants. It outlines their legal rights. Right for mutual exchange.</p>
<p>2.2.5 Registered providers, working with tenants, must regularly consider ways to improve and tailor their approach to delivering landlord services including tenant engagement. They must implement changes as appropriate to ensure services deliver the intended aims.</p>	<p>P - Information and advice provided on request and detailed in the Resident Involvement Strategy 2020-2024. Residents are also involved directly in the delivery and direction of housing management services through various forms such as the Tenant & Leaseholder Committee, Supported Housing Forum, etc. Our Block Champions provide us with feedback on our estates services and contact us regularly to shape our service.</p> <p>Our Tenant Improvement Group work collaboratively with Officers to deliver estate improvements and allocate a ring-fenced budget for improvements. They also work with partners to make the most of an match fund the ring-fenced budget.</p> <p>We commissioned TPAS to carry out a TPAS smart review in Autumn 2023 to health check our services and ensure compliance with emerging legislation. The outcome of this review has fed into a full re-engineering by TPAS of our tenant engagement starting in Spring 2024</p>
<p>2.2.6 Where a registered provider is considering a change in landlord for one or more tenants, or a significant change in management arrangements, it must consult affected tenants on its proposals at a formative stage and take those views into account in reaching a decision. The consultation must:</p> <p>a. be fair and accessible;</p>	<p>Y – We empower our residents to feed into proposals at the informative stage through effective consultation. This may be but not limited to online consultation via our website, surveys, door knocks and focus groups. Depending on the type and scope of the change the consultation method is adapted to maximise the opportunity for affected Tenants to feed into the process. Following consultation we publish you said, we did to show how the Tenants input has been listened to and fed into the service review.</p> <p>We have commissioned TPAS to carry out a TPAS smart review in Autumn 2023 to health check our services and ensure compliance with emerging legislation. A full review of the Get involved strategy and all engagement opportunities will take place during 2024.</p>

<p>b. provide tenants with adequate time, information and opportunities to consider and respond;</p> <p>c. set out actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer term; and</p> <p>d. demonstrate to affected tenants how the consultation responses have been taken into account in reaching a decision.</p>	<p>We have recently set up the platform engagement HQ to facilitate online engagement. This is being used to enable consultations, as well as supporting out resident engagement strategies for our high rise blocks.</p>
<p>2.3 Information about landlord services</p>	
<p>2.3.1. Registered providers must provide tenants with information about the:</p> <p>a) available landlord services, how to access those services, and the standards of service tenants can expect;</p> <p>b) standards of safety and quality tenants can expect homes and communal areas to meet;</p> <p>c) rents and service charges that are payable by tenants; and</p> <p>d) Responsibilities of the registered provider and the tenant for maintaining homes, communal areas, shared spaces footnote 31 and neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Y – Our Tenants handbook provides all the information Tenants needs to know about their Tenancy, estate and what they can expect from us as a landlord. This is supported by our housing service standards and repairs handbook. These documents are available online and in different formats on request. Where Tenants do not have access to the internet they can speak to our contact centre, who can provide hard copies, or verbal information and advice. Rent increase letters are send annually, and account information like balance and current rent can be accessed via our ‘My Dacorum’ tenant portal on the website.</p> <p>Lettable standard is published online, along with the communal safety policy.</p> <p>Tenancy agreement and associated policies outline the service and standards expected. Our house your home outlines the service standard.</p> <p>Estate inspections are graded on expected standards and actions to improve tracked through action plans.</p>
<p>2.3.2 Registered providers must communicate with affected tenants on progress, next steps and outcomes when delivering landlord services.</p>	<p>Y – We use a range of ways to communicate with Tenants when affected by a change or outcome of a landlord service. Tenants can choose a preferred communication method which suits them.</p> <p>We have dedicated mailboxes for services, we provide drop in services. An annual housing open day. High rise block online engagement areas, and events. Collaborative with the Complaints Ombudsman, engagement opportunities and forums we promote and encourage our tenants to use.</p>
<p>2.3.3 Registered providers’ housing and neighbourhood policies must be fair,</p>	<p>Y – All housing policies are co-produced and reviewed by out Tenant and Leaseholder Committee (TLC). Where a policy may have significant impact on Tenants they are invited to</p>

<p>reasonable, accessible and transparent. Where relevant, policies should set out decision-making criteria and appeals processes.</p>	<p>focus groups during the policy development to feed their view and experiences in. For transparency we publish all out policies on our website, and they are available in hard copy upon request.</p> <p>A good example is the allocations policy, complaints, aids and adaptations and ASB,</p>
<p>2.3.4 Registered providers must make information available to tenants about the relevant roles and responsibilities of senior level employees or officers, including who has responsibility for compliance with the consumer standards.</p>	<p>Y– We publish details of our senior leadership team on our website.</p>
<p>2.4 Performance information</p>	
<p>2.4.1 Registered providers must meet the regulator’s requirements in relation to the tenant satisfaction measures set by the regulator as set out in Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Technical Requirements and Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Tenant Survey requirements.</p> <p>2.4.2 Registered providers must:</p> <p>a) collect and process information specified by the regulator relating to their performance against the tenant satisfaction measures. The information must be collected within a timeframe set by the regulator and must meet the regulator’s requirements in Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Technical Requirements and Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Tenant Survey requirements</p> <p>b) annually publish their performance against the tenant satisfaction measures. This should include information about how they have met the regulator’s requirements set</p>	<p>Y – To embed the TSM’s into our continuous improvement culture at DBC we are monitoring the data on a quarterly basis, and the feedback is being used to develop improvement plans. The Satisfaction data is being collected by an external contractor MEL research, and the performance data is being collected via our in-house KPI/insight software Inphase.</p> <p>We are commissioning a new engagement and consultation platform CX feedback which will enable the collection of TSM tenant satisfaction measures and also improve communication and consultation with Tenants through push notifications, and direct communication and marketing.</p>

<p>out in Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Technical requirements and Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Tenant survey requirements. This information must be published in a manner that is timely, clear, and easily accessed by tenants; and</p> <p>c) annually submit to the regulator information specified by the regulator relating to their performance against those measures. The information must be submitted within a timeframe and in a form determined by the regulator.</p>	
<p>2.4.3 In meeting 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 above, registered providers must ensure that the information is an accurate, reliable, valid, and transparent reflection of their performance against the tenant satisfaction measures.</p>	<p>Y - To ensure the data being collected for the TSM's is compliant with the regulatory requirement we have instructed external quality assurance from our consultant Altair.</p>
<p>2.4.4 Registered providers must provide tenants with information about:</p> <p>a) how they are performing in delivering landlord services and what actions they will take to improve performance where required;</p> <p>b) how they have taken tenants' views into account to improve landlord services, information and communication;</p> <p>c) how income is being spent; and</p> <p>d) their directors' remuneration and management costs.</p>	<p>Y – We report on performance of the housing service and financial information in the annual report. Director's remuneration is available on our website. In Spring 2024 we will report our performance against the TSM's and associated improvement plans. During the year we report, 'you said, we did' in monthly Tenant publications, to feedback how Tenants views are taken into account and acted upon.</p> <p>HRA business plan is presented and scrutinised by TLC annually.</p> <p>We conduct an annual external VFM audit.</p> <p>The annual report for housing is co-developed with tenants and informed by consultation and engagement with our involved Tenants.</p>
<p>2.5 Complaints</p>	

2.5.1 Registered providers must ensure their approach to handling complaints is simple and accessible.	Y - Complaints procedures are well publicised and can be made through any means of communication. We have published service standards for responding to complaints.
2.5.2 Registered providers must publicise their complaints process and what tenants can do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or how a complaint was handled.	Y - We publish details of our complaints procedure and policy online. Including the different stages if Tenants are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint.
2.5.3 Registered providers must provide tenants with information about the type of complaints received and how they have learnt from complaints to continuously improve services.	Y - Performance and lessons learnt reports are escalated to HSLT monthly to analyse trends, and suggest and monitor improvement plans.
2.6 Self-referral	
2.6.1 Registered providers must communicate in a timely manner with the regulator on all material issues that relate to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the consumer standards.	<p>Y - We closely monitor compliance with the Consumer standards and have a process in place to self-refer to the regulator non-compliance.</p> <p>Recent self-referral on compliance which has now been closed off. Commissioned EY independent auditor to review following a fire, the outcome was in the introduction of the health and safety dashboard, fire safety group and building safety compliance.</p> <p>As a directorate we are proactive around monitoring risk. Weekly DMT agenda looks at emerging policy and any risks.</p>
Neighbourhood and Community Standard	
Code of practice:	

Maintenance of shared spaces

51 - 'Shared spaces' are spaces used by a registered providers' tenants that are not the responsibility of the landlord, as opposed to communal areas where landlords have direct responsibilities for ensuring their safety and maintenance.

52 - Although the maintenance of shared spaces as defined in the Standards is not the responsibility of registered providers, they are expected to liaise with other parties as appropriate to ensure this outcome is achieved. This may entail, for example, working with local partners to develop a community garden in the local area, or liaising with partners to organise the removal of fly tipping.

Local co-operation

(Relevant to required outcome 1.2.1 and specific expectation 2.2.1)

53 - The regulator acknowledges that the roles registered providers play in promoting social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas in which they operate are likely to vary, as providers need to take account of their strategic objectives, the views of tenants and their presence in those areas, amongst other considerations.

Safer neighbourhoods

(Relevant to required outcome 1.3.1 and specific expectations 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.5)

54 - Anti-social behaviour and hate incidents can have a significant negative impact on tenants of social housing, both for those experiencing them directly and for those living in the community where the ASB and hate incidents are occurring.

55 - In order to deter and tackle ASB and hate incidents effectively in areas where they operate, registered providers must work with appropriate partners, with a common aim of trying to reduce ASB and hate incidents.. Joint initiatives may include, for example, providing mediation services to try to resolve disputes before they escalate, undertaking security measures and environmental improvements and providing diversionary activities.

56 - It is vital that registered providers have effective policies and processes to tackle ASB and hate incidents, and they should communicate these to tenants. These should include their approaches to investigating reports of ASB and hate incidents (including the roles of other relevant agencies), the support available to affected tenants and the actions they take to deal with perpetrators of ASB and hate incidents.

57 - Registered providers should take into account the diverse needs of tenants in considering how tenants report ASB and hate incidents to them, and eliminate any barriers to reporting such incidents.

58 - In managing reports of ASB and hate incidents, including keeping tenants informed about the progress of their ASB case, registered providers should be mindful of their data protection obligations and any ongoing legal proceedings.

59 - We expect registered providers to take a victim-centred approach to supporting tenants affected by ASB. This support can take different forms such as, for example, making a referral to an external support agency or taking into account the wishes of the complainant when determining the

course of action the provider will take. As part of this approach, registered providers should consider how they support vulnerable perpetrators of ASB, to help them to sustain their tenancy.

Domestic abuse

(Relevant required outcome 1.4.1 and specific expectations 2.4.1 and 2.4.2)

60 - Registered providers should understand the significant impact that domestic abuse can have both on tenants experiencing it and their household members. In achieving this outcome, registered providers should make tenants aware of appropriate support and advice available regarding domestic abuse, including from third party organisations.

61 - As part of their approach to domestic abuse, registered providers should consider, for example, the skills of staff supporting tenants experiencing domestic abuse and any appropriate specialist training they would benefit from, offering to provide a same-sex staff member to support them, or offering appropriate referrals to specialist domestic abuse agencies.

62 - Registered providers should have a victim-centred approach to assisting tenants who experience domestic abuse. To be able to identify and respond appropriately to reports of domestic abuse, registered providers should ensure they have an appreciation of the different specific needs of tenants who experience it, including those arising from the tenant's protected characteristics, such as disability and race. As part of their approach, registered providers must handle sensitive information relating to cases of domestic abuse in compliance with relevant legislation.

63 - The duty referred to in 2.4.2 refers to the duty placed on local authorities in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the Act) to develop and implement a strategy for accommodation-based support (which according to the Act is support in relation to domestic abuse, provided to victims of domestic abuse, or their children, who reside in relevant accommodation) in its area. Further information about this duty can be found in the government's [statutory guidance] (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-act-2021>).

Required outcomes

1.1 Maintenance of shared spaces

1.1.1 Registered providers must work co-operatively with tenants^[^5], other landlords and relevant organisations to contribute to the upkeep and safety of shared spaces ^[^6] associated with their homes.

1.2 Local cooperation

1.2.1 Registered providers must co-operate with relevant partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they provide social housing.

1.3 Safer neighbourhoods

1.3.1 Registered providers must work in partnership with appropriate local authority departments, the police and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.

1.4 Domestic abuse

1.4.1 Registered providers must work co-operatively with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable tenants to access appropriate support and advice.

1. Specific expectations

2.1 Maintenance of shared spaces	
2.1.1 Registered providers must work co-operatively to assist in resolving issues affecting the upkeep and safety of the shared spaces associated with their homes.	<p>Y – The housing service works closely with the Clean, Safe and Green team (CSG) who deliver estate services. The Tenancy team have a schedule of regular estate inspections to monitor the standard of communal space, following inspections issues are report and resolved working in collaboration with CSG and the housing cleaning service. Tenants volunteer to be block champions and carry out their own estate inspections to report issues, and monitor the standards of the communal areas they live in. Where a block of flats has a shared internal space this will be inspected monthly to ensure escape routes are clear in line with our Safety in Communal Areas Policy.</p> <p>Pilot projects are taking place with CSG to review grounds maintenance. Evidence Maintenance of shared spaces 2.1.1. Shared green space project with clean, safe and green</p>
2.2 Local Cooperation	
<p>2.2.1 Registered providers, having taken account of their strategic objectives, the views of tenants and their presence within the areas where they provide social housing, must:</p> <p>a) identify and communicate to tenants the roles registered providers play in promoting social, environmental and economic wellbeing and how they will achieve them; and</p> <p>b) Co-operate with local partnership arrangements and the strategic housing function of local authorities where they are able to assist them in achieving their objectives.</p>	<p>Y - We provide updates via Dacorum Life magazine to residents, and the website. Partnership arrangements are also outlined and monitored through the housing strategy. The new Strategic Investment team are also working to strengthen the working relationships and communication between Dacorum and registered providers.</p> <p>Our Corporate plan sets out strategic objectives, local plan consultations facilitate community engagement, including Tenants and the wider residents of Dacorum. Our strategies are interlinked and have a golden thread of our corporate aims including housing strategy, climate strategy.</p> <p>Wider corporate projects like the Hemel garden communities, Hemel vision, deliver strategic aims Estate improvement Project work with collaborate. Resident annual survey and community safety action plan – annual strategic assessment</p>
2.3 Safer neighbourhoods	
2.3.1 Registered providers must have a policy on how they work with relevant organisations to deter and tackle ASB in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.	Y - ASB Policy in place, published on the website and hard copy available upon request. This includes the governance structure for the management for community safety which includes local problem solving.

	Community safety action plan monitored monthly by JAG which is reported back to the CSP Strategy group, to ensure accountability and that partners are working collaboratively.
2.3.2 Registered providers must clearly set out their approach for how they tackle and deter hate incidents in neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.	<p>Y – Our ASB policy clearly sets out how we tackle and deter hate crime.</p> <p>Hate crime is included in the community safety action plan, including measurable to monitor success.</p> <p>Hate crime included in the ASB policy and reported through the performance data as part of the TSM's</p> <p>As part of refresh of service, developing an ASB leaflet and community safety leaflet so that people know how to report and what to expect.</p> <p>2025 – New community events will be taking place. Community safety also attend our annual housing open day to engage with the community, provide advice, support and signposting.</p>
2.3.3 Registered providers must enable ASB to be reported easily and keep tenants informed about the progress of their case.	<p>Y - ASB can be reported in person, over the telephone, in writing, via email or through the website. Information about what is defined as ASB is in the Tenants handbook and on the website. All reports are acknowledged and assigned a responsible officer. We work closely with Hertfordshire Police when reports of Race / Hate crimes are received.</p> <p>ASB procedure including contact times in place, this is agreed with complainants and allows them the choice of how often they would like to be contacted.</p> <p>Website including all ASB info, so residents can easily report through our submission page. Introduced a new risk assessment which will be rolled out for us to ensure our communication is tailored to their requirements.</p> <p>A rota is being introduced to cover 3 working days a week, Tues-Thurs so that people can come into the Forum and report in person to a dedicated Officer.</p>
2.3.4 Registered providers must provide prompt and appropriate action in response to ASB, having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available to them.	Y - Our approach to ASB focuses on prevention both at an individual level and also the physicality of estates and partnership working. We work closely with mediation Hertfordshire to support the resolution of Neighbourhood disputes. The Tenancy Team work closely with the legal team to deliver a comprehensive range of tools and legal powers to resolve issues.

	<p>Policy refresh includes the addition of all tools and powers which can be used. This information will be available online.</p> <p>Legal powers are used on a daily basis to solve local problems. The new legislation under the ASB action plan will provide a wider range of powers to deal with younger people.</p> <p>When we take successful action including closure orders we publicise this through comms. Where joint action is taking place we ensure that the comms teams of partners work with a joint approach.</p> <p>ASB Comms plan includes a newsletter to inform Tenants or activity. This will be published 2 times a year, focussing on relevant information and key messages which are relevant to the season. This will be a partner document with the Police and other support agencies.</p>
2.3.5 Registered providers must support tenants who are affected by ASB, including by signposting them to agencies who can give them appropriate support and assistance.	<p>Y - ASB Policy endorses victim centred approach including referrals to other agencies such as Mediation Services and Victim Support for example.</p> <p>Within the ASB policy one of the tools we use is mediation, we also use victim support and Beacon. This is all referenced in our ASB policy.</p>
2.4 Domestic abuse	
2.4.1 Registered providers must have a policy for how they respond to cases of domestic abuse.	<p>Y - We have recently republished our Domestic Abuse Policy for Residents, Tenants, Leaseholders and Members, and we have published our first standalone Domestic Abuse policy for Employees. Both are underpinned by a victim-centred approach and a number of accompanying procedures.</p>
2.4.2 Registered providers must co-operate with appropriate local authority departments to support the local authority in meeting its duty to develop a strategy and commission services for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation.	<p>Y - We have taken an active role in contributing to the development of Hertfordshire County Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-25, which aims to 'commission high-quality, accessible support services for victims of domestic abuse that deliver on safety related outcomes, including support within safe accommodation and provision for standard, medium and high-risk victims' and we continue to work alongside them to support this aim.</p> <p>DBC chair the local DA forum. Senior staff members from housing and property service are engaged with county wide partnership activity, including DA county wide forum, and DA steering groups, MARAC and also have an internal DA review process.</p>

	<p>The Council is committed to gaining DAHA accreditation. Work towards this is taking place and progressing well.</p> <p>We actively refer to specialist services run by SADA, SAHWR, Cherish and women's aid</p>
<p>Tenant Standard</p>	
<p>Code of practice:</p>	

Allocations and lettings

(Relevant to required outcome 1.1.1 and specific expectations 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.4 and 2.1.6)

64 - Registered providers should have effective policies and processes in place for allocating their homes and should work effectively with local authorities to help meet identified local housing need. They should clearly set out their decision-making criteria, including in relation to transfers.

65 - In order to be able to take the needs of tenants and prospective tenants into account in the allocations process, registered providers will need to have a robust and accurate understanding of local housing need and their homes, including in relation to which homes have been adapted.

66 - Tenancy fraud can take a number of forms. Actions providers can take to prevent and tackle tenancy fraud include, carrying out effective checks before the start of and during a tenancy, publicising their approach including outcomes to tackling tenancy fraud, and providing guidance to staff on how to prevent, detect and take action against suspected tenancy fraud.

67 - Information on the government's CORE system is available online: [CORE - Home communities.gov.uk](https://www.core.gov.uk).

Tenancy sustainment and evictions

(Relevant to required outcome 1.2.1 and specific expectations 2.2.1 and 2.2.2)

68 - Registered providers may provide support directly to tenants to help them maintain their tenancy or licence, or they may signpost tenants to appropriate organisations to provide this support. Examples of support that may be provided include, helping tenants to manage their money and maximise their income, offering energy advice, and helping vulnerable tenants to be able to live independently, including those who experience mental health issues, or drug and alcohol dependency.

69 - Where a registered provider ends a tenancy or licence, they must offer those affected timely advice and assistance. This assistance can take the form of, for example, helping affected tenants to apply for alternative housing or signposting them to appropriate support and advice services. Registered providers should ensure that any advice and assistance about housing options is offered at the earliest opportunity in the process, to enable those affected to understand the process of finding suitable alternative accommodation.

70 - Alongside other objectives, such as minimising loss of rental income, registered providers should bear in mind their objectives as landlords of social housing, including in relation to preventing homelessness and helping tenants to maintain their tenancies, when considering whether to escalate eviction proceedings.

Tenure

(Relevant to required outcomes 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 and specific expectations 2.3.1b, 2.3.1d and 2.3.1g)

71 - Registered providers should consider the suitability of the tenancies that they issue, taking into account the tenants' needs and the purpose of the accommodation. They must comply with all relevant law in issuing tenancies or terms of occupation. Where appropriate, they may wish to seek legal advice.

72 - Registered providers that make use of licences as the basis of occupation should ensure that they use them appropriately.

73 - As part of setting out their approach to tenancy management, registered providers should help tenants understand both their own responsibilities and those of their landlord in relation to their tenancy.

74 - In relation to 2.3.1b and 2.3.1d, registered providers should only grant tenancies for a minimum fixed term of less than five years in exceptional circumstances and should not adopt a blanket approach to granting such tenancies. For example, all tenants in a particular area or all tenants of a certain age. Where a registered provider makes use of fixed term tenancies for a term of less than five years, they should set out in a policy the circumstances in which they will do so.

75 - As part of meeting 2.3.1g, registered providers should be able to demonstrate how they have taken into account the needs of vulnerable households in their approach to tenancy management.

76 - For clarity, reference to the use of probationary tenancies in our requirements includes the use of introductory or other equivalent tenancies.

Mutual exchange

(Relevant to required outcome 1.4.1 and specific expectations 2.4.3)

77 - Support to relevant tenants wishing to mutually exchange may include, for example, registered providers supplying them with clear and simple information about the mutual exchange process, including the associated responsibilities of the landlord and of the tenant, and helping tenants to register with an online mutual exchange service if required.

1. Required outcomes

1.1 Allocations and lettings

1.1.1 Registered providers must allocate and let their homes in a fair and transparent way that takes the needs of tenants⁷ and prospective tenants into account.

1.2 Tenancy sustainment and evictions

1.2.1 Registered providers must support tenants to maintain their tenancy or licence. Where a registered provider ends a tenancy or licence, they must offer affected tenants advice and assistance.

1.3 Tenure

1.3.1 Registered providers shall offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock.~

1.3.2 They shall meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements or terms of occupation.

1.4 Mutual exchange

1.4.1 Registered providers must support relevant tenants living in eligible housing to mutually exchange their homes.

Specific expectations

2.1 Allocations and lettings

<p>2.1.1 Registered providers must co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing functions and assist local authorities to fulfil their duties to meet identified local housing need. This includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties, and through meeting obligations in nominations agreements.</p>	<p>Y – We work closely with our RPs in accordance with the terms of the Service Level and Nominations Agreements. We agree local lettings plans for new developments for LA and RP sites and adhere to them as closely as possible.</p> <p>Through new build developments we receive 100% nomination rights and 75% of relets. New Strategic Housing and Investment team ensure that there is liaison between Housing Needs and Planning teams to ensure that future developments are what we require in terms on housing need.</p> <p>Our Homelessness Prevention team investigate homelessness and make relevant decisions in line with the HRA 2017. We are able to discharge our homeless duty to properties in our own housing or RP stock. In addition to this, we are able to utilise these properties during the preventative and relief stages.</p> <p>Allocations are made to homeless, home seekers and transfer applicants. It is important to have this mix to relief service pressures and create movement around our own housing stock and RP stock.</p> <p>We have set up a new RP forum which will happen regularly to build communication and cross working, section 106. RP's were also involved in the stakeholder engagement of the housing strategy.</p>
<p>2.1.2 Registered providers must seek to allocate homes that are designated, designed, or adapted to meet specific needs in a way that is compatible with the purpose of the housing.</p>	<p>We enable home seekers who require specific allocations to be allocated a property through our direct offer list. When a property with an adaptation becomes void we work hard to match the property to someone needing the adaptation, to make best use of that property and help someone to live in a home suitable for their needs.</p> <p>We provide an adaptations service working closely with the County Council to support residents to live well in their homes with the adaptations they require. Where adaptation isn't possible, we support them to move to a more appropriate property.</p> <p>Residents are encouraged to complete an application form which outlines their needs, medical forms and assessments are completed. Homes are advertised to allow residents to exercise choice based on their needs and requirements.</p>
<p>2.1.3 Registered providers must develop and deliver services to address under-occupation and overcrowding in their</p>	<p>Y - We work closely with internal housing teams and have processes and policies in place to assist with under occupation. Our current housing allocations policy gives applicants a strong amount of points to 'downsize' as well as a financial incentive as part of our 'help to move' policy. Applicants that are downsizing are eligible to move to a property that is</p>

<p>homes. These services should be focused on the needs of tenants.</p>	<p>smaller than their current property but are not restricted to move to a property of their housing need.</p> <p>Applicants that are overcrowded as per our allocations policy and bedroom standards would be eligible for overcrowding points. We only count bedrooms and do not count a dining room as a typical bedroom for applicants.</p> <p>Applicants that need to move will be given the choice of what properties they would like to bid for via our choice based lettings system. However, applicants that require extensive adaptations will be placed on a direct offers list to ensure the property is feasible for adaptations.</p> <p>We have support services for vulnerable households. Any applicant under the age of 25 is allocated a support worker to ensure a smooth transition to independent living. Any vulnerable household will have the support from the Tenancy Sustainment team to benefit from.</p> <p>Any household that receives an offer of accommodation via the homeless route, will continue to benefit from their welfare support worker for a minimum of 6 months.</p> <p>Housing open day recently promoted mutual exchange and other affordable housing options. We fund our residents to have access to the mutual exchange online platform. Strategic housing team are holding a task and finish group to explore ideas for a mutual exchange matching service.</p>
<p>2.1.4 Registered providers must take action to prevent and tackle tenancy fraud.</p>	<p>The Tenancy Management Team work closely with our corporate anti-fraud/legal teams to address proactively allegations or suspicions of tenancy fraud and actions taken are proportionate and in line with the legal framework.</p> <p>Additionally our services are periodically proactively engaged in the Nation Fraud Initiative. Tenancy audits and investigations of sub-lets is carried out regularly.</p>

2.1.5 Registered providers must have a fair, reasonable, simple and accessible appeals process for allocation decisions.	Y – This is outlined in our allocations policy
2.1.6 Registered providers must record all lettings and sales as required by the Continuous Recording of Lettings (CORE) system.	Y – We complete CORE reports for every letting where this is required. These are reported on monthly as part of our own KPIs. This includes Council and RP stock.
2.2 Tenant sustainment and evictions	
2.2.1 Registered providers must provide services that support tenants to maintain their tenancy or licence and prevent unnecessary evictions.	<p>Y – Approved Tenancy, Rent Collection and ASB policies in place which detail our preventative approach and various interventions we will make. In addition we have a ‘Residents with Additional Needs’ Policy detailing our approach to tenancy sustainment.</p> <p>Kevin M – provide some more detail about sustainment.</p> <p>Income offer breathing space to support out residents, as well as signposting to support services.</p> <p>Early intervention to homeless team. Cost of living events are taking place regularly. The next one is in January.</p> <p>Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, homeless forum. DHP and part of the DHP panel. Homeless prevention fund.</p>
2.3 Tenure	
2.2.1 Registered providers must provide services that support tenants to maintain their tenancy or licence and prevent unnecessary evictions.	Y – We have an Intensive Support Team providing support to those with complex, multiple needs. Our Independent Living Team provides a floating support service to those in the community aged 55+. Our Income & Welfare team provide a holistic service supporting residents who are financially excluded and supporting to sustain rent payment. We also work closely with a number of partners such as Herts Young Homelessness, Genesis Floating Support, Children Services, Adult Care Services, and Community Mental Health Team etc. We also host the multi-agency mental health liaison group. We sit on the Strategic Accommodation Board which develops a strategic approach to care leavers and families in need

	DBC sit on the Herts strategic housing supported accommodation board –co chair with HCC. Herts strategic lead for the MEAM agenda, collaborative group with all agencies across herts, prevention of crisis for adults with complex needs.
2.2.2 Registered providers must provide tenants required to move with timely advice and assistance about housing options before the tenancy or licence ends.	Y – Included in Tenancy Policy, homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.
2.3.1 Registered providers shall publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management, including interventions to sustain tenancies and prevent unnecessary evictions, and tackling tenancy fraud, and set out: ~ a) The type of tenancies they will grant.~ b) Where they grant tenancies for a fixed term, the length of those terms. ~ c) The circumstances in which they will grant tenancies of a particular type. ~ d) Any exceptional circumstances in which they will grant fixed term tenancies for a term of less than five years in general needs housing following any probationary period. ~ e) The circumstances in which they may or may not grant another tenancy on the expiry of the fixed term, in the same property or in a different property. ~ f) The way in which a tenant or prospective tenant may appeal against or complain about the length of fixed term tenancy offered and the type of tenancy offered,	Y - included in Tenancy & Mutual Exchange Policies

<p>and against a decision not to grant another tenancy on the expiry of the fixed term. ~</p> <p>g) Their policy on taking into account the needs of those households who are vulnerable by reason of age, disability or illness, and households with children, including through the provision of tenancies which provide a reasonable degree of stability. ~</p> <p>h) The advice and assistance they will give to tenants on finding alternative accommodation in the event that they decide not to grant another tenancy. ~</p> <p>i) Their policy on granting discretionary succession rights, taking account of the needs of vulnerable household members.~</p>	
<p>2.3.2 Registered providers must grant general needs tenants a periodic secure or assured (excluding periodic assured shorthold) tenancy, or a tenancy for a minimum fixed term of five years, or exceptionally, a tenancy for a minimum fixed term of no less than two years, in addition to any probationary tenancy period.~</p>	<p>Y – included in Tenancy Policy</p>
<p>2.3.3 Before a fixed term tenancy ends, registered providers shall provide notice in writing to the tenant stating either that they propose to grant another tenancy on the expiry of the existing fixed term or that they propose to end the tenancy.~</p>	<p>Y – included in Tenancy Policy, allocations policy</p>
<p>2.3.4 Where registered providers use probationary tenancies, these shall be for a maximum of 12 months, or a maximum of 18 months where reasons for extending the</p>	<p>Y – included in Tenancy Policy</p>

probationary period have been given and where the tenant has the opportunity to request a review.~	
2.3.5 Registered providers shall grant those who were social housing tenants on the day on which section 154 of the Localism Act 2011 comes into force, and have remained social housing tenants since that date, a tenancy with no less security where they choose to move to another social rented home, whether with the same or another landlord. (This requirement does not apply where tenants choose to move to accommodation let on Affordable Rent terms).~	Y – included in Tenancy & Mutual Exchange Policy, decant policy, statutory homeless
2.3.6 Registered providers shall grant tenants who have been moved into alternative accommodation during any redevelopment or other works a tenancy with no less security of tenure on their return to settled accommodation.~	Y - We have a move out policy in place, decant policy, statutory homeless
2.4 Mutual exchange	
2.4.1 Registered providers must offer a mutual exchange service which allows relevant tenants potentially eligible for mutual exchange, whether pursuant to a statutory right or a policy of the registered provider, to easily access details of all (or the greatest practicable number of) available matches without payment of a fee. ~	Y - We have our own mutual exchange policy that is separate to the allocations policy but there are links between the two to establish bedroom standards.
2.4.2 Registered providers must publicise the availability of any mutual exchange service(s) it offers to its relevant tenants.~	Y - Information is available on our website as well as Moving with Dacorum. A Mutual Exchange policy is in place and accessible to the public.

<p>2.4.3 Registered providers must provide support for accessing mutual exchange services to relevant tenants who might otherwise be unable to use them.~</p>	<p>Y – We employ a Housing Needs support officer who is able to provide IT support to applicants that do not have access or unable to use the internet. Applicants are able to place bids for properties via the phone or by text messaged. Supported Housing applicants can sign up to a weekly newsletter where they are provided with the properties that are currently being advertised. Our customer service unit is also accessible to applicants if they have any questions or queries regarding the allocation process.</p>
<p>2.4.4 Registered providers must offer tenants seeking to mutually exchange with information about the implications for tenure, rent and service charges.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Throughout the consumer standards ‘tenants’ means tenants and other occupiers of social housing which includes licensees and shared owners (unless explicitly stated). ↵ 2. Throughout the consumer standards ‘tenants’ means tenants and other occupiers of social housing which includes licensees and shared owners (unless explicitly stated). ↵ 3. ‘Shared spaces’ are those spaces used by tenants that are not the responsibility of the landlord, as opposed to communal areas where landlords have direct responsibilities for ensuring their safety and maintenance. ↵ 	<p>Y – We subscribe to House exchange which is a national mutual exchange service. We provide this service free for residents. The scheme is administered by our Tenancy Management team ensuring a smooth process for residents and that time scales are adhered to be statutory regulations. Information on properties available is online.</p>

Appendix 1 – Improvement plan

Specific expectation	Current position	Improvement action	Progress	Responsible person	RAG status	Target Date
2.2.2 Registered providers must assist tenants who wish to implement tenant-led activities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services. This includes in relation to the neighbourhood where applicable	P – We are developing our Local offers and estate improvement plans to empower residents to implement tenant led scrutiny and activities. We are keen to empower our residents and have a dedicated improvement budget known as the Tenant improvement Grant (TIG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an approach and supporting policy document outlining approach to local offers 	Complaints Bootcamp held on the 23rd June 24. TLC introduced their 'Issues KLog – for scrutiny' in April 24. Grove Hill Estate Improvement Plan co-created with over 20 local residents.	SQA / Housing Ops	In progress	31/08/2024
2.2.5 Registered providers, working with tenants, must regularly consider ways to improve and tailor their approach to delivering landlord services including tenant engagement.	P - Information and advice provided on request and detailed in the Resident Involvement Strategy 2020-2024. Residents are also involved directly in the delivery and direction of housing management services through various forms such as the Tenant & Leaseholder Committee, Supported Housing	We commissioned TPAS to carry out a TPAS smart review in Autumn 2023 to health check our services and ensure compliance with emerging legislation. The outcome of this review has fed into a full re-engineering by TPAS of our tenant engagement starting in Spring 2024	TPAS commissioned for reengineering February 2024	SQA	In progress	31/08/2024

<p>They must implement changes as appropriate to ensure services deliver the intended aims.</p>	<p>Forum, etc. Our Block Champions provide us with feedback on our estates services and contact us regularly to shape our service.</p> <p>Our Tenant Improvement Group work collaboratively with Officers to deliver estate improvements and allocate a ring-fenced budget for improvements. They also work with partners to make the most of an match fund the ring-fenced budget.</p>					
<p>2.2.2 Registered providers must assist tenants who wish to implement tenant-led activities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services. This includes in relation to the</p>	<p>P – We are developing our Local offers and estate improvement plans to empower residents to implement tenant led scrutiny and activities. We are keen to empower out residents and have a dedicated improvement budget known as the Tenant improvement Grant (TIG)</p> <p>Supported housing forum have made</p>	<p>TPAS have been commissioned to complete a full reengineering of the tenant engagement, and scrutiny starting in February 2024.</p>	<p>TPAS commissioned for reengineering February 2024</p>	<p>SQA</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<p>31/08/2024</p>

neighbourhood where applicable	<p>recommendations to improve their local area which has been funding via a ring-fenced budget for tenant led estate improvements.</p> <p>TLC have requested and carried out scrutiny on our property services offer, community safety and the TSM data. Our involved residents were also central to the recent TPAS smart review in Winter 2023 which influenced recommendations for service improvement outlined in the outcome report.</p>					
2.2.3 Registered providers must provide accessible support that meets the diverse needs of tenants so they can engage with the opportunities in 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.~	P – We deliver resident engagement opportunities in diverse formats to encourage diversity. We have had lots of success since the Pandemic with our online Forums and Focus groups which have encourages involvement from Tenants with caring responsibilities, from outlying areas and those with disabilities which	TPAS have been commissioned to complete a full reengineering of the tenant engagement, and scrutiny starting in February 2024.	TPAS commissioned for reengineering February 2024	SQA	In progress	31/08/2024

	<p>make it challenging to attend an office/community centre based event. We also offer different levels of engagement, including light touch which encourages involvement from those who have limited time to commit.</p> <p>Lets dance sessions promoted activity and for older residents to stay well.</p> <p>The Tenancy sustainment team have been holding regular open sessions for their residents to gain support from Officers and peer support.</p> <p>Housing open day 2023 – Engaged face to face with over 500 residents, as part of that we gained feedback and consulted on the community garden designs.</p> <p>Christmas events at sheltered schemes. To promote wellbeing and tackle isolation.</p>					
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	<p>Cost of living events are being held regularly to support residents and signpost to services, both in person and online.</p> <p>Block safety events took place in the Autumn of 2023, to launch the resident engagement strategy documents, and promote resident safety to residents.</p> <p>Damp and mould residents sessions in partnership with Bucks university took place in November 2023, to provide them with advice and support to tackle damp and mould in their properties.</p> <p>Community safety survey annually along with a wider resident's survey, feeding into related service improvement work.</p> <p>Customer strategy engagement and feedback sessions. The corporate team co</p>					
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	<p>developed our customer strategy with tenants and residents through focus groups and telephone/online system testing.</p> <p>Pre-tenancy online DORIS training, there is also a resident’s panel at the Elms who hold focus groups with residents of the Elms.</p> <p>Residents can also submit complaints and compliments about the staff and service.</p> <p>Social media we engage through our facebook, instagram and linked in. Dacorum life hard copy newsletter goes out twice a year and monthly e-newsletter. Consultation platform introduced – local plan and other engagement.</p>					
<p>2.2.4 Registered providers must support tenants to exercise their Right to</p>	<p>No current policy covers this</p>	<p>Agree via HSLT the required approach</p>	<p>This is a Policy gap but is on the HSLT policy action tracker to</p>	<p>Housing Ops</p>	<p>Not Started</p>	<p>301/10/24</p>

Manage, Right to Transfer or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate.			agree how we cover this off			
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Index of important documents

Housing Strategies:

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- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2021-2024
- Housing Strategy 2019-2021
- Housing Income Management Strategy 2018-2022
- Private Sector Housing Strategy 2020-2024
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2024
- Asset Management Strategy 2016-2020
- Tenancy Strategy 2019-2023
- Get Involved Strategy 2020-2024

Housing Policies:

- Water Treatment Policy
- Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements Policy
- Safety in Communal Areas Policy
- Solid Fuel Policy
- Temporary Accommodation Policy
- Tenant Alterations and Improvement Policy
- Rent Arrears and Write Off Policy
- Rents and Other Charges Policy
- Rechargeable Works Policy

- Pet Policy
- Private Sector Housing Civil Penalty Policy
- Private Rented Sector (PRS) Enforcement Policy
- No Second Night Out Policy
- Mutual Exchange Policy
- Mobility Scooter Policy
- Involved Tenants Expenses Policy
- Housing Allocations Policy
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Policy
- Help to Move Policy
- Gas Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Decant Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy
- Aids and Adaptations Policy

Corporate documents:

[Corporate plan 2022-2025](#)

[Growth and Infrastructure Strategy to 2050](#)

[Annual Report 2021-2022](#)

[Hemel Garden Communities](#)

[Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter](#)

[New Local Plan](#)



May 2024

Dacorum Borough Council
External review:
Self-assessment
against the Consumer
Standards 2024/25

 Altair

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DISCLAIMER: Our report is addressed to the directors of Dacorum Borough Council. We stress that our report is confidential and prepared for the addressees only. It should not be used, reproduced, or circulated for any other purpose, whether in whole or in part without our prior written consent, which consent will only be given after full consideration of the circumstances at the time.

If the report is released to a third party without prior consent from Altair, we do not acknowledge any duty of care to the third party and do not accept liability for any reliance placed on the report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 Altair Consultancy and Advisory Services (“Altair”) have been commissioned by Dacorum Borough Council (“Dacorum”) to conduct an assessment of their self-assessment against the 2024/25 consumer standards.
- 1.1.2. In response to the new regulatory environment, Dacorum has conducted a self-assessment by conducting a forward look to new consumer standards, active from 1st April 2024 for the year 2024/25.
- 1.1.3. Altair has reviewed the self-assessment for the 2024/25 consumer standards. The assessment has been made in context of the proactive regulation that applies after 1st April 2024.
- 1.1.4. The documentation reviewed by Altair is set out in Appendix 1. In assessing the documentation, provided to Altair, consideration has been made in context of a more robust regulatory environment from 1st April 2024.
- 1.1.5. Our review has identified a range of differing findings and recommendations. We have approached the reporting of recommendations as follows:
- **Overarching recommendations** – for the entire approach for self-assessment. Overarching recommendations are outlined in the executive summary.
 - **Detailed recommendations** – against the individual consumer standards are outlined in individual chapters in this report.
 - **Redrafting recommendations** – such as areas of clarity and error have been directed to Dacorum officers.
- 1.1.6. Table 1 sets out our overarching recommendations across the self-assessment.

Table 1: our recommendations

Element of review	Overarching recommendations
2024/25 self-assessment	<p>Recommendation 1: The self-assessment could be improved further by the addition of further information on how the Cabinet, Senior Leadership Team, and the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee are sighted in relation to performance, such as providing evidence of the reports and frequency and whom they are reviewed by.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: The self-assessment supporting documents, including policies and strategies, are kept up to date and available to tenants and other stakeholders, if requested or on the website. That a process is in place for ongoing management of keeping them up to date.</p>

Conclusions

- 1.1.7. The approach to the self-assessment by Dacorum is proportionate considering regulatory expectations.

- 1.1.8. In the consumer standards self-assessment, there has been high-level information has been provided to aim to demonstrate compliance.
- 1.1.9. Our findings in relation to the oversight of Safety and Quality elements highlight an area of concern that Dacorum should consider further, particularly what appears to be a lack of sight of key 'Big 7' compliance areas and the delivery of associated actions.
- 1.1.10. The 2024/25 self-assessment offers an opportunity to the Cabinet, Senior Leadership Team and Scrutiny Committees to further establish the monitoring of performance and assessment of the delivery of actions. They also can provide an aide memoire to the Cabinet, Senior Leadership Team and Scrutiny Committees for the programmed inspection.

2. Introduction and Regulatory Context

- 2.1.1. The Regulator of Social Housing (“RSH”) is responsible for ensuring that social landlords deliver against the consumer standards. Until April 2024, regulatory intervention was set at a high threshold identified as the serious detriment test. This meant that the RSH would only assess consumer matters where there was a risk that a landlord’s approach would cause ‘serious detriment’ to their residents.
- 2.1.2. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 brought in a proactive role for the RSH on regulating the consumer standards. With effect from 1st April 2024, it gave the RSH new powers to inspect RPs and to intervene when they believe necessary, removing the ‘serious detriment test’. The regulator also has new enforcement powers and tools to do so.
- 2.1.3. The RSH will now regulate the consumer standards with the same powers and proactivity as they have done with the economic standards for Private Registered Providers (Governance and Viability, Rent and Value for Money). This will be through programmed inspections, held every four years.
- 2.1.4. Programmed inspections are new to local authorities, following inspection, the regulator will issue a consumer grading¹. Dacorum are experiencing a programmed inspection in wave 1 of the RSH inspection programme.
- 2.1.5. In addition to programmed inspections, the threshold for self-referral on consumer matters has been clarified in the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard, with landlords expected to communicate with the regulatory in a timely matter on all material issues that relate to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the consumer standards.
- 2.1.6. The consumer standards have been revised in readiness for the proactive environment. The new set of consumer standards were published on 29th February 2024.² For landlords, this means that for organisations, there has been a period of uncertainty in relation to the final versions of standards.
- 2.1.7. In delivering in the new regulatory environment, the focus will remain on the sight of delivery by Cabinet and the Senior Leadership as well as the assurance around key areas of risk.

Dacorum’s self-assessment approach

- 2.1.8. The self-assessment against the consumer standards is centrally coordinated by the Head of Strategy Quality and Assurance and the Strategy Quality and Assurance Manager – Housing through engagement with relevant services to provide information and data to support the drafting of the self-assessment.

¹ RSH (2024) Our approach to regulatory judgements and gradings [How we approach regulatory judgements and gradings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-we-approach-regulatory-judgements-and-gradings)

² RSH (2024) Consumer Standards [Proposed Consumer standards \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/proposed-consumer-standards)

2.1.9. The self-assessment for 2024/25 has focused on the current position and a forward-looking self-assessment in consideration of the changed standards from 1 April 2024 and a changed regulatory context.

2.1.10. In self-assessing against the consumer standards, Dacorum has also taken into account the RSH Code of Practice which provides additional guidance on how the provider can meet the consumer standards.

3. Review of the self-assessment 2024/25

Overarching findings

- 3.1.1. Self-assessment has been carried out by officers against the current consumer standards. All four assessments have been produced on single document with a section for each standard.
- 3.1.2. Each commentary (“Dacorum’s position”) provides an assessment against the specific expectations and expected outcomes set by the regulator and detail of the assurance against the elements.
- 3.1.3. Across the self-assessments, a comprehensive commentary and some links to source documentation is provided on the majority of the elements of the standards.
- 3.1.4. The self-assessment has identified a gap in resident involvement and delivering on the expectations of the standard. An action plan has been provided for the Transparency, Involvement and Accountability Standard with timescales and leads.
- 3.1.5. Supporting documentation has been provided of the SMART Review self-assessment of resident involvement.
- 3.1.6. Across the self-assessment we have found evidence of policies and procedures, of which a number are out of date or due review.
- 3.1.7. The self-assessments do not consistently outline how Cabinet and Senior leadership are sighted on the delivery against the standards, nor are relevant delegations and reporting for non-compliance.

Overarching recommendations

Recommendation 1: The self-assessment could be improved further by the addition of additional information on how the Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and Senior Leadership Team are sighted in relation to performance, such as providing evidence of the reports and frequency and by whom they are reviewed.

Recommendation 2: The self-assessment supporting documents, including policies and strategies, are kept up to date and available if requested or on the website. That a process is in place for ongoing management of keeping them up to date.

Findings – Safety and Quality Standard

3.1.8. Our findings for the Safety and Quality Standard have been assessed as follows:

- Providers are required to identify and meet all legal requirements that relate to the health and safety of tenants in their homes and communal areas. The self-assessment outlines that there is monthly reporting of the Health and Safety ‘Big 7’ compliance however, oversight of performance of both the certification process and addressing hazards is not clear in the assessment.
- The self-assessment refers to a Health & Safety Board that oversees compliance, but it does not indicate how frequently it meets; the last meeting date provided in the self-assessment was

over five months ago at time of reporting. It does not advise how progress with urgent actions are monitored between meetings.

- There are quarterly health and safety reports completed by heads of service and an estate inspection programme and a tracker of these. The assessment confirms that compliance reports are provided to the Senior Leadership Team on a quarterly basis.
- Providers are required to ensure that all required actions arising from health and safety assessments are carried out within appropriate timescales, the assessment advises there is a compliance tracker and that there is an internal audit regime. It does not confirm if this relates to homes, communal areas, or both or the oversight for compliance.
- There is a strategy in place to ensure that Dacorum has an accurate record of the condition of properties at an individual property level based on physical assessment and that this is in progress with target dates. However, oversight of the activity is not clear in the assessment.
- There is information in the assessment on where stock condition data is held and how it will be used for reporting and to prioritise planned programmes and investments.
- The assessment advises that the stock condition data will be used to inform and determine planned maintenance programmes from April 2024. The self-assessment confirms that stock condition data will be used to inform investment and disinvestment opportunities but does not advise of the interim arrangements until a full suite of data is available in 2027/28.
- Decent Homes performance has been provided in the self-assessment but there is no confirmation about whether tenants whose homes does not meet the standards is aware of this or the plans to achieve compliance.
- The assessment confirms that regular estate inspections are completed but not the frequency or details of monitoring. Providers are expected to understand and fulfil their maintenance responsibilities in respect of communal areas the self-assessment has identified that further information is required in the assessment.
- Landlords are required to provide a range of ways to report repairs and set out clear timescales for the delivery of repairs. The self-assessment confirms how tenants can report repairs and maintenance issues directly to the contractor and offers various options. KPI reporting is in place that monitors the delivery of timely repair through the contract management update, but it is not clear on the frequency of the monitoring. The assessment confirms that timescales are given at the time of reporting, however, it is not clear is this is due date for repair or appointment date for repair.
- The Tenant Leaseholder Committee minutes from November 2023 indicate that there has been some dissatisfaction with the contractor due to complaints about poor communication, repeat visits, delays to complete repairs. Dacorum is currently undergoing a robust procurement process to appoint a new contractor by 2026.
- In the response supporting information is provided for the standard and some statistical detail to support the assurance of compliance.

Detailed recommendations – Safety and Quality Standard

3.1.9. Recommendations for consideration for the self-assessment are:

- Ensuring that the self-assessment contains robust information on the monitoring of health and safety requirements, to give assurance that there is proactive management of compliance and required actions. Information on the internal audit regime of the compliance tracker would support the assessment, including frequency.
- Include information within the self-assessment on any other sources used to assess and record the condition of homes as proposed in the Code of Practice including complaints, EPCs and repairs.
- The self-assessment suggests some properties that do not meet Decent Homes Standard and confirms they are reviewed. Confirmation about whether affected residents have been kept informed could be included.
- The safety of tenants should be considered in the design and delivery of landlord services, the assessment could include information on the expectations of contractors and front-line staff or where this is communicated. It could also include more information on how Dacorum ensure safety of tenants is taken into account when designing or introducing new services, as well as the process for contractors to highlight concerns.
- Further information could be provided on how tenants are kept informed on progress with repairs in complex cases, where there are multi-trades and the timescales for providing a new appointment for follow up work when an appointment cannot be made on site.
- The missing information for 2.3.4 on registered providers understanding and fulfilling their maintenance responsibilities in respect of communal areas should be completed.
- Provide information on the interim asset management arrangements pending the collection of the full decent homes data.

Findings – Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

3.1.10. Detailed findings of the self-assessment are:

- Each area of the standard has been addressed and relevant examples of activities by Dacorum to demonstrate related activities to deliver on the standard.
- For communication and information, there are details of what is in place currently and ideas in progress/development.
- Some of the information that was available on Dacorum's website was out of date. Most of this has now been updated or removed however, where removed, this has left some gaps.
- The assessment identifies some oversight by Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee confirming that they ensure that EDI and human rights have been considered in policies and strategies.
- It has been acknowledged that the resident involvement activities have undergone a review by TPAS to ensure that they are fit for purpose and further development is underway. Supporting evidence of the review and finding has been provided.
- The Complaints and Feedback Policy on that has been provided website has not yet updated in line with the new complaints handling code, which was introduced on 1st April 2024, self-assessment against the new code is due on 30th June 2024.

- There were some gaps in the self-assessment where information was not available at the time.

Recommendations - Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

3.1.11. Some recommendations for consideration to strengthen the assessment are:

- Supporting statistical data on the demographic data for tenants such as what percentage of demographic data is held and how it is kept up to date to show that robust information is held to form the basis for considering the diverse needs of tenants. Where there are gaps, other data sources (census and English Housing Survey) can be used in line with the Code of Practice
- Outlining whether tenants have been involved in the review of key communications (tenant handbook, standard letters) to ensure that the information is clear, accessible, and relevant.
- An assessment be considered for completion reviewing the profiling/demographic data of tenants accessing services to see if there are any gaps or unexpected under-representation of people with different characteristics accessing services.
- The self-assessment has advised that guidance is needed to outline Dacorum's approach to Right to Manage and it is recommended that this is completed, and awareness is raised among front line officers.
- Provision of some data to support the examples of compliance would assist in providing evidence of compliance. Consideration could be given to utilising relevant TSM results in future assessments.
- For some of the projects that are being undertaken, it is recommended that leads and target dates are provided e.g. the introduction of CX feedback to ensure delivery.
- It is recommended that more information is provided about the outcomes of activities and initiatives.
- It is recommended that more information is provided, if it is available, on how tenant involvement or feedback has influenced decision making. Some examples of key initiatives could be included, again to show outcomes. Consideration should be given to all changes to the landlord service and how tenant feedback and engagement has informed delivery.
- If there is a reasonable adjustment policy or strategy in place, a copy could be provided to support the evidence of ensuring accessibility and appropriate communication with tenants.
- It is recommended that details are provided on the types of complaints received and how lessons have been learned from complaints will be available to tenants in line with these requirements in the standard.
- That the gaps identified by Dacorum in the self-assessment identified are completed.

Findings - Neighbourhood and Community Standard

3.1.12. Findings for the Neighbourhood and Community Standard have been assessed as:

- There are initiatives happening with shared spaces and the Clean, Safe and Green team, but it does not reference if there is a knowledge of shared spaces and what other partner agencies are involved and what agreements are in place with them ensuring the safety and cleanliness of the spaces.
- The assessment refers to block champions but not how many there are, percentage coverage, and how outcomes are monitored.

- The self-assessment links to the Housing Strategy and the Local Plan is under development with updates on the website.
- The self-assessment refers to the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy. The new ASB Policy went to the Housing Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2024. Checks indicate that an ASB policy is currently not available on the website although there is information on reporting ASB allegations. This would also include hate crime.
- Dacorum have identified some actions in the self-assessment to address gaps in compliance.
- Domestic Abuse Policy is available and up to date.

Recommendations – Neighbourhood and Community Standard

3.1.13. Recommendations for consideration are:

- Provision of some information on outcomes and where they are monitored or links to the reports.
- Providing more information on Dacorum's approach to hate crime and the new Anti-Social Behaviour Policy is up to date and provided on the website.
- Confirm how ASB case handling is monitored and acted on. The assessment refers to actions plans and the approach to keeping tenants informed however, in TSM quarter one data provided shows a satisfaction rate of 45%.
- Applying deadlines/target dates and leads to the actions identified in the self-assessment to ensure delivery.

Findings - Tenancy Standard

3.1.14. Overall findings for the self-assessment are:

- Some of the information and evidence provided may be a central local authority function rather than the housing department, for example activities of the council's central housing options team.
- There is no information provided on checks completed before a tenancy starts and during a tenancy to tackle or prevent tenancy fraud, as suggested in the Code of Practice.
- Some of the policies referenced to support the assessment are not available on the website or easy to locate.
- Self-assessment refers to several initiatives to support tenancies and prevent evictions. Information is not provided on the outcome or impact of these initiatives, for example number of evictions prevented.
- The Tenure Strategy confirms that flexible tenancies are no longer used yet does not outline the approach to handling current flexible tenancies.

Recommendations – Tenancy Standard

3.1.15. Recommendations to be considered for the self-assessment are:

- More supporting information could be provided including links to policies and strategies that support the assessment and any statistical data to demonstrate delivery of outcomes. This could include data on tenants who downsize and the allocation of adapted properties, for example.
- It is recommended that more information is provided on anti-fraud activity and information on cases identified are resolved to demonstrate outcomes.
- Consider if the CORE reporting is utilised to understand local housing need for example who is being rehoused, from where, what properties are becoming available and how many offers are being made to indicate level of demand or fitness of stock.
- Provide the information identified by Dacorum to be added in the self-assessment for example the detail on tenancy sustainment.
- The self-assessment contains reference to activities, initiatives, policies and strategies to show compliance with the standard. It is recommended that consideration is given to the provision of some performance data or links to performance reports and confirmation of who monitors. This is to demonstrate outcomes from the activities, policies and that they are being delivered and making a difference to services and tenants.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1.1. The approach to self-assessment by Dacorum is proportionate in light of the regulatory expectations with a focus on ensuring that the 2024/25 assessment is made considering future expectations.
- 4.1.2. In the self-assessment there has been a high-level of information provided to demonstrate compliance. Additional detail could be provided as outlined in this report to further support the assessment.
- 4.1.3. Our findings in relation to the oversight of Safety and Quality elements highlight an area of concern that Dacorum should consider further, particularly what appears to be a lack of sight of key 'Big 7' compliance areas and the delivery of associated actions.
- 4.1.4. Some of the gaps should be completed where the information was not available at the time of the assessment.
- 4.1.5. The assessment is for internal and external assurance, including the Regulator and so it is recommended that more detail is provided. In addition, that the supporting documentation is provided, if requested.
- 4.1.6. The 2024/25 self-assessment offers an opportunity to the Cabinet, Senior Leadership Team and Scrutiny Committees to further establish the monitoring of performance and assessment of the delivery of actions. They also can provide an aide memoire to the Cabinet, Senior Leadership Team and Scrutiny Committees for the programmed inspection.
- 4.1.7. It is recommended that Dacorum ensure that the supporting documentation is available and up to date and that there is an identified ongoing review process to ensure this is maintained.

Appendix 1– Reviewed Documentation

Theme	Reviewed Documents (including linked and source documentation)
Consumer Standards	Safety and Quality Standard Self-Assessment
	Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard Self-Assessment
	Neighbourhood and Community Standard Self-Assessment
	Tenancy Standard Self-Assessment

Contact details

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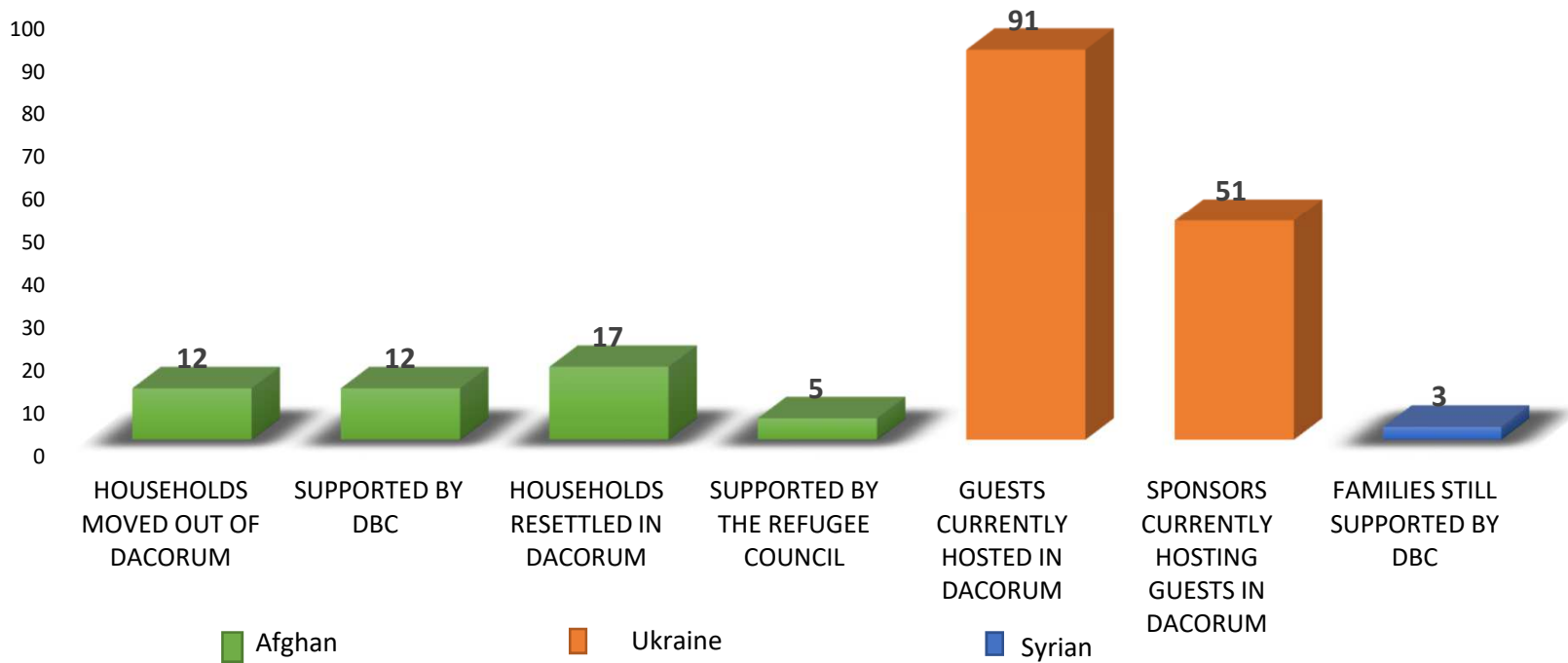


Humanitarian Response Programme Overview
Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny committee
Natasha Beresford – Assistant Director, Housing Operations & Safe
Communities
Mandy Peters – Programme Manager
15 July 2024

Overview

- Activity in Dacorum since 2016 – Syrian Resettlement Scheme
- Demands increased – dedicated team developed 2023
- Programme activity: Syrian, Afghan, Ukraine resettlement & Asylum schemes
- Coordinating services for refugees resettled in Dacorum
- Access to accommodation & home set up (resettlement schemes)
- Household provisions
- Tailored support plans
- Liaison with various entities, including statutory bodies, VCS & healthcare services
- Priority to ensure a cohesive response to integration
- Collaboration - effective management of contingency accommodation (asylum hotels)
- Asylum seekers coordination: support integration & to prevent community tensions
- Early intervention & prevention activity
- Ukraine accommodation checks
- Preventing homelessness & risk of rough sleeping
- Regional Asylum co-ordination – ensuring place-based approach to dispersal

Resettlement Data

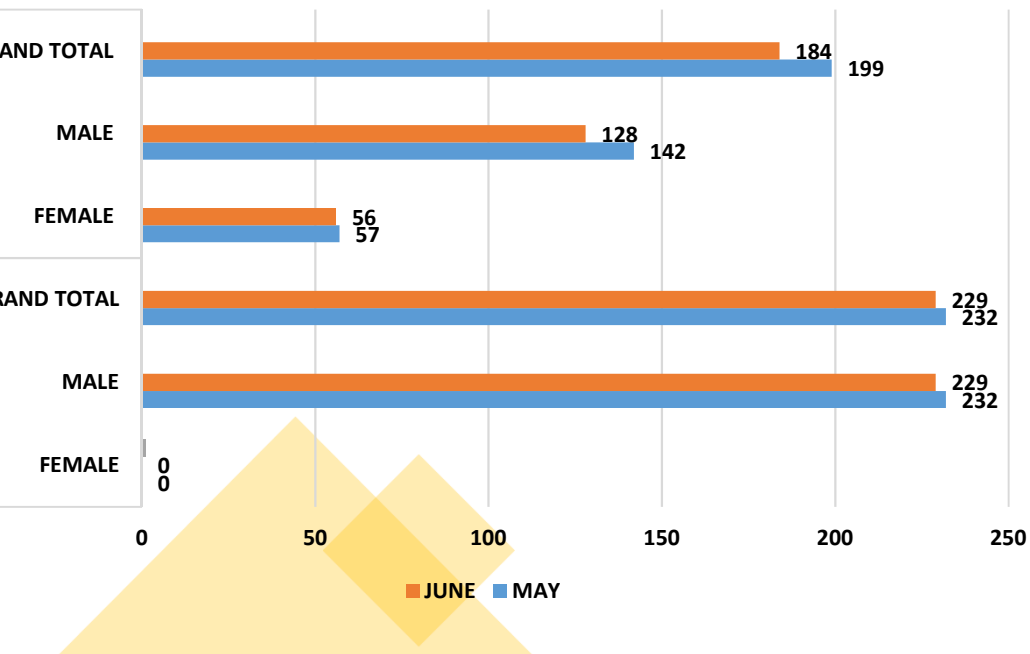


Asylum Data

Figures for the number of residents at the two Asylum contingency in Dacorum:

Hempstead House: April 238 residents
 Holiday Inn: April 267 residents

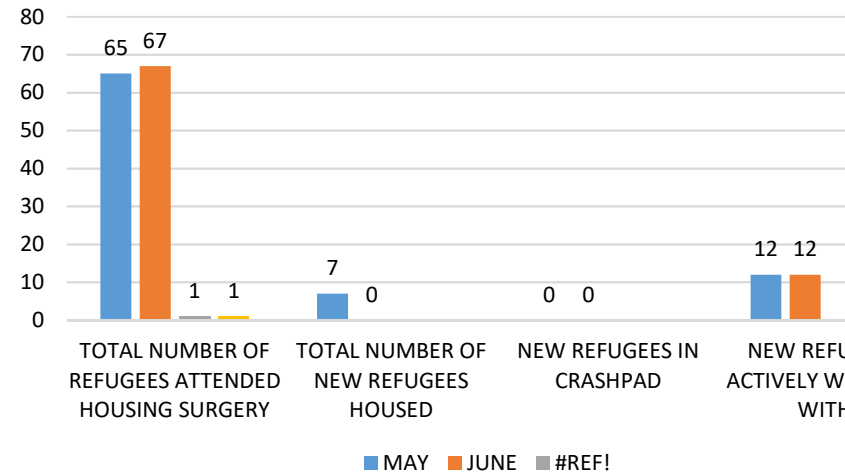
NUMBER OF RESIDENTS AT THE TWO ASYLUM SITES (IA)



Figures for the number of refugee engagement with DBC:

- New refugees working with team Q1: 48
- Refugees - Housing Surgery Q1: 156
- New Refugees housed Q1: 78
- New Refugees in Crashpad Q1: 11

NEW REFUGEES ENGAGEMENT



Dispersal

Dispersal - Home Office moves asylum seekers into LA area
Dispersed to initial (contingency) accommodation
Areas subject to mandatory dispersal
Dispersal consultation April 2022
No legal obligation to destitute asylum seekers
Regional Allocation Plan (RAP) for all LA regions
Dispersal pending asylum claim
Transfer of PRS to exit contingency (hotel/short term)
Claim determined → new refugee status
Achieve fair & equitable approach to dispersal
Office 2024 plan, step towards place-based approach
Determined by indexing factors
Region plan to - 12,437 bedspaces (national 100,919)
2024 dispersal allocation 390 bedspaces
Household vacates dispersal, creates capacity for new arrival.



6 x dispersal properties in borough (in addition to contingency sites):

- (4) Adeyfield
- (2) Leverstock Green

38 service users across properties

Funding

Integration tariff: £20,510 pp over three years period claimed / Flexible Housing Fund: £7,100 pp

Homelessness one off: £9,150 per household –accepted full or relief duty & placed household in TA

Wraparound (TA support for up to 6 months): £28 pp per day – paid at end of 3 mths & 6 mths

UKRS resettlement Integration tariff: £20,520 over five years period claimed

funding

Funding: £750 per person as of last financial year, no update yet on funding for this current year

Funding: £3,500 per bedspace to be paid quarterly in arrears as of last financial year, no update yet on funding for this current year

Funding resource funded until March 27 using grant, current balances - Refugee: **£180,199**; Asylum: **£167,955** & Ukraine: **£96,010**

Funding remaining: **£444,163**

Efficient & creative use of funding, alleviates impact on other council statutory services & General Fund

Direct funding paid to HCC, who fund DBC to complete accommodation checks



Risks

The Home Office's short notice periods make resettlement difficult

Essential information on residents is lacking or delayed

Support until leave to remain granted, limits early intervention

Increased demand for Resettlement Support

Competing demands for PRS accommodation

Demands for support, access to housing register, homeless & temporary accommodation support

Uptake for the Afghan women's support group has been quite low initially

Risk of increase of rough sleeping due to large single person cohort

Pressures on local infrastructure including projected housing demand VCS, health & education

Cost of living

Housing pressures, not enough affordable housing available in local area, working closely with PRS landlords locally and out of area

Mitigate an increase in homeless cases

Community frustrations & tensions

Increasing risks of exploitation, safeguarding, ASB & crime incidences.



Our approach

Proactive engagement at local & regional level to ensure collaboration
Lobbying Home Office & accommodation provider to access timely information
Managing expectations, signposting early & encourage self help
Support to landlords, negotiation & support to access to out of area PRS accommodation
Comparison with Herts LA's & RP's, flexible approach
Maximising use of grant funding
Training, education & awareness empowerment
Women taking ownership of activity & development of women's group
Risk of increase of rough sleeping due to large single person cohort
V/P agreement to achieve flexibility on room rate
Collaboration with VCS
Event & counter terrorism awareness training to all staff & partners
Activity to ensure meaningful use of time
Funded initiative - Employability for overseas nationals (EON)
OL provision

Progress



Strategic Migration information

From April 2024 Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) holders – advice to create account to access eVisa
eVisas will replace BRP cards
BRP holders should visit www.gov.uk/evisa for the latest information

Changes to the Ukraine scheme

Home Office change to the Immigration Rules late 2024

Individuals who hold or have been granted permission to enter the UK - apply for further permission
Apply from three months before the expiry of current visa
eVisas provides 18 months permission

Ukrainians in the UK can - move into independent living, secure rental agreements & employment
Supports Ukrainian government's preference - future repatriation of citizens to help rebuild Ukraine
Sponsor eligibility requirements change – Sponsors must themselves be settled in the UK.

Considerations

General election may see further ministerial change
Additional expectations may arise from new or existing conflicts



Thank you for listening
Any questions?

Agenda Item 10

H&C OSC Work Programme 2024/2025

Meeting Date	Report Deadline	Items	Contact Details	Background information
15 July 2024	4 July 2024	Action Points (from previous meeting)		
		Q4 Quarterly Budget Monitoring Report	Fiona Jump – Head of Financial Services Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		RSH Consumer Standards Self-Assessment	Simon Walton Interim Head of Strategy, Quality and Assurance Simon.walton@dacorum.gov.uk	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		Humanitarian Response Programme Overview	Natasha Beresford – Assistant Director Housing Operations and Safer Communities Natasha.beresford@dacorum.gov.uk	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
11 Sept 2024	30 Aug 2024	Action Points (from previous meeting)		
		Q1 Quarterly Budget Monitoring Report	Fiona Jump – Head of Financial Services Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		Q1 Housing Performance &	David Barrett – Assistant Director – Strategic Housing and Delivery	<i>To review and scrutinise</i>

		Tenants 'Voice Report	David.barrett@dacorum.gov.uk Mark Pinnell – Assistant Director Property and Place Mark.pinnell@dacorum.gov.uk Natasha Beresford – Assistant Director Housing Operations and Safer Communities Natasha.beresford@dacorum.gov.uk	<i>quarterly performance</i>
		Supported Housing Strategy	Oliver Jackson Head of Housing Operations Oliver.jackson@dacorum.gov.uk	
		Tenant Satisfaction Measures Report	David Barrett – Assistant Director – Strategic Housing and Delivery David.barrett@dacorum.gov.uk	
16 Oct 24	4 Oct 24	Action Points (from previous meeting)		
20 Nov 24	8 Nov 24	Action Points (from previous meeting)		
		Q2 Quarterly Budget Monitoring Report	Fiona Jump – Head of Financial Services	<i>To review and scrutinise</i>

			Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk	<i>quarterly performance</i>
		Q3 Housing Performance & Tenants 'Voice Report	David Barrett – Assistant Director – Strategic Housing and Delivery David.barrett@dacorum.gov.uk Mark Pinnell – Assistant Director Property and Place Mark.pinnell@dacorum.gov.uk Natasha Beresford – Assistant Director Housing Operations and Safer Communities Natasha.beresford@dacorum.gov.uk	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		Action Points (from previous meeting)		
4 Dec 2024	22 Nov 2024	Action Points (from previous meeting)		
		Joint Budget <i>Ideally no further items to be added</i>		

15 Jan 2025	3 Jan 2025			
		Action Points (from previous meeting)		
5 Feb 2025	24 Jan 2025	Action Points (from previous meeting)		
		Joint Budget <i>Ideally no further items to be added</i>		
12 March 2025	28 Feb 2025	Action Points (from previous meeting)		
		Q3 Quarterly Budget Monitoring Report	Fiona Jump – Head of Financial Services Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		Q3 Housing Performance &	David Barrett – Assistant Director – Strategic Housing and Delivery	<i>To review and scrutinise</i>

	Tenants 'Voice Report	David.barrett@dacorum.gov.uk Mark Pinnell – Assistant Director Property and Place Mark.pinnell@dacorum.gov.uk Natasha Beresford – Assistant Director Housing Operations and Safer Communities Natasha.beresford@dacorum.gov.uk	<i>quarterly performance</i>

Public place protection order Revision -. Date tbc

Cultural Strategy - Diane – TBC

Rent Policy Update – Oliver Jackson – TBC

Add climate change (from Oct minutes)