



## AGENDA ITEM: SUMMARY

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	6 September 2017
<b>PART:</b>	1
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	'Get Involved' – Dacorum Borough Council Tenant Involvement strategy update
<b>Contact:</b>	Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing  Emily-Rae Maxwell – Strategy, Improvement and Engagement Team Leader
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with an update on the housing services progress against the commitments set out in the Tenant Involvement strategy 2016 - 2020.  This will include an opportunity to comment on the drafted Community Development Policy.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 For members to note the progress of the housing services approach to tenant involvement and review this in line with the commitments set out in the strategy</li> <li>2 For members to note the success of the services new approach to tenant involvement and how this has contributed to raising Dacorum Borough Council's profile nationally</li> <li>3 For members to note changes to the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard as set out by the Department for Communities and Local Government</li> <li>4 For members to comment on the Community Development Policy and consider the role of Dacorum as a landlord in shaping Dacorum's communities.</li> </ol>
<b>Corporate objectives:</b>	Preventing and tackling homelessness contributes to the follow corporate objectives;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clean, safe and enjoyable environment</li> <li>• Building strong and vibrant communities</li> <li>• Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need</li> <li>• Delivering an efficient and modern council</li> </ul>
Implications:	<p><u>Financial implication</u></p> <p>There are no additional financial implications.</p> <p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>It is important that we deliver value for money for our tenants. Robust tenant involvement that uses an outcome focused approach to engagement and scrutiny means we can capture where improvements have been made as a result of tenant involvement and any associated costs or savings. Shaping our annual service plans using our tenants' priorities helps us to allocate our resources and deliver what is important within the resources that are available. We will work with our tenants to identify more efficient ways of working, such as moving to digital channels enabling us to maximise the resources available. Sharing resources and skills with partner organisations and exploring opportunities for additional funding will also help us to deliver more for less.</p>
Risk Implications	The Housing Service's Operational Risk Register is presented to the committee on a quarterly basis
Equalities Implications	A community impact assessment was carried out as part of the approval process for the strategy
Health And Safety Implications	There are no direct Health and Safety implications from the strategy.
Consultees:	<p>Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing</p> <p>Natasha Brathwaite – Group Manager, Strategic Housing</p> <p>Emily-Rae Maxwell – Strategy, Improvement and Engagement Team Leader</p> <p>Tenant and Leaseholder Committee Members</p>
Background papers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Get Involved' strategy 2016 – 2020</li> <li>• Case study – Digital Skills</li> <li>• Case study – The Great British Spring Clean</li> <li>• Case study – YTI taste off</li> <li>• Draft - Community Development Policy</li> </ul>

Glossary of  
acronyms and any  
other abbreviations  
used in this report:

H&C OSC – Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee

SI&E – Strategy, Improvement and Engagement

DBC – Dacorum Borough Council

TLC – Tenant and Leaseholder Committee

YTI – Youth Tenant Involvement

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2016 the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (H&COSC) supported the housing service to shape a new approach to delivering tenant involvement. This led to the approval of the '*Get Involved*' Tenant Involvement strategy 2016 – 2020 by Cabinet in September 2016.
- 1.2 H&COSC agreed to take ownership of the strategy by monitoring the housing service's performance against the four commitments via an annual update.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide members with the first update since implementing the strategy. This will include actions delivered against each of the four commitments and the achievements of the housing service to date.
- 1.4 This update will also include a draft Community Development policy for members to review and provide feedback on.

## 2 Overview and Implementation

- 2.1 The vision for the '*Get Involved*' strategy is for our tenants and leaseholders to feel listened to, feel empowered to influence decisions and the opportunity to challenge us.
- 2.2 To achieve this vision, the Strategy, Improvement and Engagement (SI&E) team (previously known as the Policy and Participation Team) worked with tenants to develop four outcome based commitments to be delivered by 2020, these are;
  - Commitment One: All Dacorum tenants and leaseholders have the opportunity to '*Get involved*'
  - Commitment Two: Dacorum Borough Council works in partnership to ensure the housing service is shaped by the needs of our tenants
  - Commitment Three: Young people within Dacorum's tenant population have a voice and a positive influence in their local communities
  - Commitment Four: Dacorum Borough Council's housing service is accountable to our tenants and leaseholders

For a full copy of the '*Get Involved*' strategy, see appendix 1.

- 2.3 In addition to these commitments, the housing service established a new structure for delivering tenant involvement. This was based on three levels of involvement and underpinned by a need to build in flexibility so all tenants could get involved.
- 2.4 The H&COSC played a key role in shaping Level Three – ‘official involvement’ with a specific focus on the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee (TLC).
- 2.5 The former TLC disbanded in July 2016 and attended a celebration event hosted by the Mayor to thank them for their contribution to the housing service. Throughout the summer, the SI&E team focused on recruiting a new TLC and launching the strategy.
- 2.6 H&COSC suggested the new structure for the TLC involved an experienced chair and a councillor presence within the committee. Councillor Isy Imarni volunteered to take the role as TLC chair for the first year and support the team to recruit the new committee. It was also agreed the new TLC should include a membership of 10 tenants, leaseholders and independents with tenants maintaining the majority.
- 2.7 The SI&E team received 23 applications to the TLC and 132 tenants and leaseholders interested in other involvement opportunities.
- 2.8 With the support of Councillor Imarni, the new TLC was recruited in September 2017 and have now completed a full year. This included formal quarterly meetings where committee members received a strategic update of each area within the housing service and the involvement of tenants within this area. The TLC have also taken part in a number of ad-hoc consultation events on topics such as legislation changes and the impact on the housing service, allocations and benchmarking.
- 2.9 Over the course of the year the TLC received one resignation and has since appointed two additional members, both are tenants. This means the membership now includes:
  - 7 tenants
  - 3 Leaseholders
  - 1 independent
  - 1 elected member (chair)

### 3 Strategy update

- 3.1 To deliver Commitment one: all Dacorum tenants and leaseholders have the opportunity to ‘*Get involved*’ the housing service has:
  - Increased the ways tenants and leaseholders can communicate with the housing service with a specific focus on digital channels.
  - Committed to funding computer and tablet courses for supported housing tenants to help them get online and more digitally active increasing their opportunities to get involved.
  - Worked with tenants and leaseholders to ensure activities and or events are held in venues that are easily accessible and are held at appropriate times of the day so more tenants can get involved.
  - Empowered tenants to give their views on topics outside the housing service’s remit. Examples of this include facilitating a focus group of sports and physical activity

facilities within the borough and a peer assessment of the council conducted by the Local Government Association.

- Increased the services approach to collecting feedback from tenants on a regular basis and in key areas e.g. rent arrears collection, anti-social behaviour, lettings and repairs.

3.2 To deliver Commitment two: Dacorum Borough Council works in partnership to ensure the housing service is shaped by the needs of our tenants

- Worked with tenants and current housing applicants to review the allocations policy and pre-tenancy training offered following on from changes in legislation and demand for social housing within the borough.
- Developed 'Tenant Academy' which allows tenants to access a range of courses to improve their health and wellbeing, employment, education and volunteering opportunities and link to support planning within the service. This will be launched September 2017.
- Worked with Osborne to review the kitchen suppliers and wider market offer and undertook a journey mapping exercise with leaseholders to improve the process for reporting repairs.
- Enabled supported housing tenants to play a key role in the evaluation of the community alarms procurement process.

3.3 To deliver commitment three: Commitment Three: Young people within Dacorum's tenant population have a voice and a positive influence in their local communities

- Facilitated our Youth Tenant Involvement (YTI) group to undertake suicide awareness training with one member of the group going on to become a mentor within Dacorum for other young people.
- Young people accessing the housing service have also taken part in a wide range of community development activities including the 'Great British Spring Clean', creating a mural of LT Gilman Dorr Blake at Gade Tower.
- Encouraged intergenerational activities between supported housing tenants and young people to break down stereotypes and improve relationships e.g. 'The Taste Off' event.
- Supported the YTI Group to raise over £1,000 for Herts Young Homeless by taking part in the 'Sleep Out'.

- 3.4 To deliver commitment four: Dacorum Borough Council's housing service is accountable to our tenants and leaseholders
- Recruited a new TLC committee who receive strategic updates and an update of each group within housing on a quarterly basis as well as holding the council to account on involving tenants in key business decisions.
  - Committed to a full review of tenant led scrutiny and the move to a task and finish group.
  - Supported our Tenant Inspectors to undertake a full review of the Osborne Property Service Limited out of hour's service and make recommendations for improvement.
  - Undertaken consultation with the wider tenant population on key decisions within the housing service such as depooling and more recently water rates.
- 3.5 For examples of events see appendix 2, appendix 3 and appendix 4

#### 4 Tpas PRO Landlord Engagement Standards

- 4.1 In March 2017, DBC became the first housing provider in the country to achieve the Tpas PRO landlord accreditation.
- 4.2 To achieve the accreditation the housing service was required to provide evidence relating to 96 outcomes across six different themes, these were;
- Engagement Strategy
  - Resources for Engagement
  - Information and Insight
  - Influence and Scrutiny
  - Community Engagement
  - Valuing Engagement
- 4.3 To pass, an organisation must receive an 80% pass rate. This can include areas where evidence suggests the outcome has been partially met. Dacorum achieved 100% meaning that as an organisation DBC could demonstrate evidence for all 96 required outcomes. A continuous improvement plan has now been developed to ensure any areas for improvement are delivered on within the second year of the strategy.

- 4.4 The main area for improvement highlighted by the assessment was DBC's approach to tenant led scrutiny. As a result, the TLC and Housing Senior Management Team agreed to take a new approach to tenant led scrutiny known as a task and finish approach. To implement this, the former scrutiny panel was disbanded in June 2017. To establish a new panel, the housing service will be using the same method as the TLC. The new approach will allow for more tenants and leaseholders to get involved in scrutinising the housing service in a focused and structured way. The SI&E team recommend the first area scrutinised is the Housing Service – Service Standards.
- 4.5 Following on from the success of the Pro landlord engagement standards, DBC were asked to run a workshop at both the regional Tpas conference and the National Engagement Conference. The two workshops shared Dacorum's journey to achieving the Tpas Engagement Standard and raising the standards of tenant engagement nationally. This follows the best practice highlighted by Tpas within their assessment of Dacorum.

## 5 Community Development

- 5.1 The Tpas Engagement Standard emphasises not only the importance of engaging with tenants who access the housing service but encouraging people living in social housing to feel a part of their wider community. To deliver this the housing service have drafted a Community Development Policy. This outlines the housing services approach to meeting the wider strategic aims of the council by working with our tenants and leaseholders, see appendix 5.

## 6 De-regulation and changes to the National Standard

- 6.1 Within the first year of delivering the 'Get Involved' strategy, the Department for Communities and Local Government amended the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.
- 6.2 This was a result of the de-regulatory measures of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 came into force meaning social housing providers were no longer required to obtain the regulator's consent to undertake disposals, restructures and certain constitutional changes.
- 6.3 To ensure housing providers continued to consult with tenants who would be affected by such decisions, the Homes and Communities Agency proposed changes to the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.
- 6.4 The proposed changes sought to ensure that tenants have a degree of choice and protection and the opportunity to be involved in management of their properties and to be able to hold their landlords to account.
- 6.5 The amendment to the standard listed below and was introduced 14 July 2017;

*"2.2.3 Where registered providers are proposing a change in landlord for one or more of their tenants or a significant change in their management arrangements, they shall consult with affected tenants in a fair, timely, appropriate and effective manner. Registered providers shall set out the proposals clearly and in an appropriate amount*



*of detail and shall set out any actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer term. Registered providers must be able to demonstrate to affected tenants how they have taken the outcome of the consultation into account when reaching a decision.”*

6.6 Previously the standard stated;

*“2.2.3 Registered providers shall consult with tenants, setting out clearly the costs and benefits of relevant options, if they are proposing to change their landlord or when proposing a significant change in their management arrangements.”*

6.7 This amendment is in line with Dacorum’s ‘Get Involved 2016-2020’ strategy, which outlines the housing services commitment to tenant involvement and required no action at this point.

6.8 The Strategy, Improvement and Engagement team will work with the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee (TLC) to ensure this is appropriately enforced. The full amendment report and updated Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard has now been circulated to TLC members.

6.9 At the recent National Tpas Conference Dacorum outlined the impact of these changes and how to ensure an organisations approach to tenant involvement supports this way of working as part of the workshop, which was delivered to over 40 tenants and housing professionals.

6.10 DBC have also requested this is discussed at the next Taking Part Herts meeting as well as Herts Heads of Housing.

## 7 Recommendations

7.1 For members to consider the update in full and offer comments on the housing services progress towards meeting the four commitments and approach to delivering tenant involvement.

7.2 For members to note the success of the housing service through the Tpas PRO landlord accreditation.

7.3 For members to review the drafted Community Development Policy and offer any comments on the housing services approach.

7.4 For member to note the changes introduced to the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.