



| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Report for: | Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee |
| Date of meeting: | 11 October 2017 |
| Part: | 1 |
| If Part II, reason: | |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Title of report: | The Use of Roof Spaces in Council Owned Properties |
| Contact: | Margaret Griffiths Portfolio Holder for Housing Author/Responsible Officer Lindsey Walsh – Tenants and Leaseholders Team Leader |
| Purpose of report: | 1. To clarify information regarding the use of roof spaces by tenants and leaseholders in flats and houses belonging to Dacorum Borough Council |
| Recommendations | 1. That the report be noted |
| Corporate objectives: | 1. Affordable Housing |
| Implications: | <u>Financial</u> No direct costs, a review of the tenancy conditions is already progressing and an additional clause will be added regarding roof spaces. |
| 'Value for money' implications | <u>Value for money</u> To reduce damage to the loft insulation in order to reduce costs in heating and to preserve the Carbon Footprint. |
| Risk implications | The Housing Services operational risk register is monitored quarterly at the councils Housing and Overview scrutiny committee |
| Community Impact Assessment | N/A |
| Health and safety Implications | Confirming there is no access to the roof space for tenants and leaseholders living in flats will reduce the health and safety risks for these occupiers |

| | |
|---|--|
| Consultees: | Margaret Griffiths; Portfolio Holder for Housing Elliott Brooks; Assistant Director of Housing Layna Warden Group Manager Tenant and Leasehold |
| Background papers: | N/A |
| Historical background <i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context).</i> | The current tenancy agreement does not clarify the Council's position clearly to tenants and leaseholders regarding using roof spaces for personal storage. Following a recent insurance claim for damages to personal items and a greater focus on health and safety, The Housing Department is to review the content of our tenancy agreement. |
| Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report: | RTB – Right to buy |

1. Background

1.1 The roof space in a block of flats is an area of landlords responsibility and constitutes a communal area. The roof space is not included in any tenancy agreements and does not become part of a lease when a tenant exercises their RTB. The tenancy conditions state any communal area. see below

44. **You must** not store any belongings in any communal area and you must comply with the Council's Clear Landings Policy.

1.2 It has been identified that some residents are using the loft spaces, compromising the insulation which is being crushed with the weight of personal belongings and affecting access to wiring and communal water tanks. This in turn interferes with the energy efficiency of our properties and can cause areas of black mould growth due to condensation.

1.3 In addition, as this area is not included in any tenancy or leased agreements, the resident's household Insurance does not cover the damage of any items in the event of roof and/or pipe leaks.

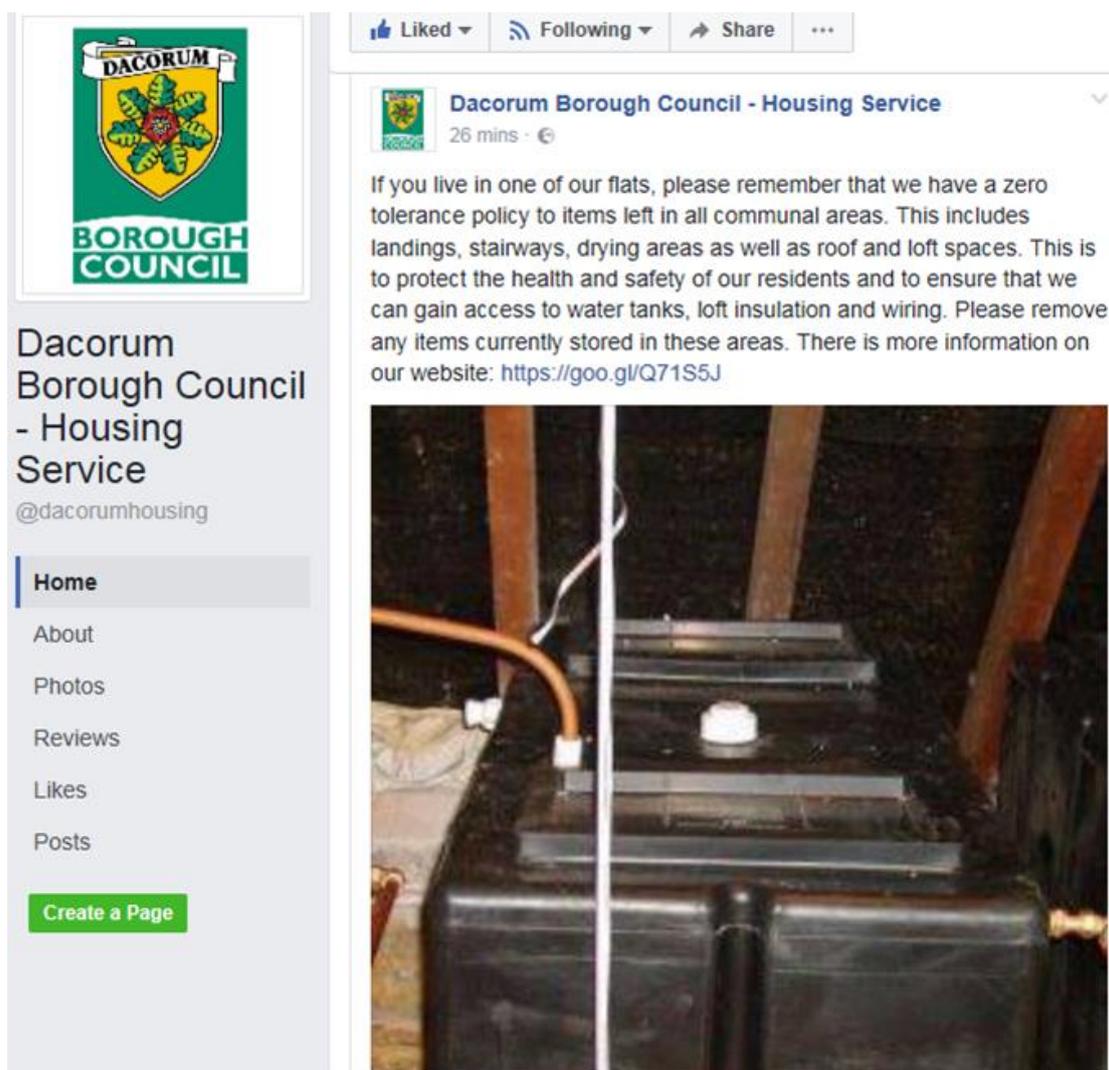
1.4 The Council have to deal with access problems to carry out essential repairs when the area is found full of personal effects and water tanks, wiring and pipes cannot be accessed until the space has been emptied. This is also a health and safety issue when residents are accessing the roof area, balancing across ceiling joists which are not designed to take the same weight as a floor.

1.6 Residents in houses, with no communal roof space, need to ask permission to store items in a loft space. The area may require the tenant to make

alterations to make it safe for access and the correct boarding, ventilation and access to water tanks and wiring would have to be maintained.

2 Confirming the Council's position

2.1 Following an insurance claim from a tenant for damage to his personal belongings that were stored in a communal roof space when the roof leaked, and in addition, a current claim for personal injury involving an accident in a roof space, the Council felt it necessary to reiterate its position regarding storing items in communal spaces to our tenants and leaseholders. The Housing Department issued guidance on their Facebook page:



The image is a screenshot of a Facebook post from the 'Dacorum Borough Council - Housing Service' page. On the left side of the screenshot is the page's profile information, including the council's crest logo and the name 'Dacorum Borough Council - Housing Service' with the handle '@dacorumhousing'. Below this is a navigation menu with options like 'Home', 'About', 'Photos', 'Reviews', 'Likes', and 'Posts', along with a 'Create a Page' button. The main content of the post is a text message that reads: 'If you live in one of our flats, please remember that we have a zero tolerance policy to items left in all communal areas. This includes landings, stairways, drying areas as well as roof and loft spaces. This is to protect the health and safety of our residents and to ensure that we can gain access to water tanks, loft insulation and wiring. Please remove any items currently stored in these areas. There is more information on our website: <https://goo.gl/Q71S5J>'. Below the text is a photograph showing a close-up of a roof space. It features a large, dark, rectangular water tank with a white cap on top. Various pipes, including a prominent orange one, and electrical wiring are visible against the wooden rafters of the roof.

2.2 Information leaflets were also produced and are available on our website in the Tenant's Handbook

3 Regulations

3.1 Dacorum Borough Council have to comply with Building Control Regulation Guidance when advising tenants and enforcing tenancy conditions; If a

tenant living in a house or bungalow intends to use the attic space to store light items such as suitcases and Christmas decorations on loose boarding this is generally satisfactory, however it does compromise the efficiency of the insulation. We must remember that the ceiling joists are intended to act as a fixing for the ceiling below and are not designed for heavy loads.

3.2 To prevent any overloading of the ceiling joists it is recommended that the loose boarding does not cover more than 50% of the usable area. Usable area is that part of the roof space with headroom greater than 1.5m (approximately 4'6").

4 Moving forward

4.1 There was a lot of feedback and interest from residents, the press and local councillors after the Facebook posting. This enabled the Council to take on board residents views and gave an opportunity to discuss the issue direct with those that had concerns.

4.2 The Housing Department are at present reviewing the tenancy conditions to reflect recent legislative changes and the use of roof spaces will be added to the Tenancy and Leased agreements in order that there is a clear guidance for tenants and leaseholders.

4.3 The Council also regularly review the information leaflet to guide tenants and leaseholders in order to improve the services surrounding this issue.