



Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	30th July 2019
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Tenancy Strategy
Contact:	Councillor Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Carly Thomas, Independent Reviewing Officer
Purpose of report:	To provide Cabinet members with an overview of the council's new Tenancy Strategy, which outlines the tenancies on offer for social housing and the relationship management with Registered Providers.
Recommendations	For Cabinet members to approve the Tenancy Strategy.
Period for post policy/project review	The strategy will be reviewed if there is related legislative change, otherwise annually.
Corporate objectives:	Clean Safe and enjoyable environment. Building strong and vibrant communities.
Implications:	Failure to have a Tenancy Strategy in place is contravention of the Localism Act.
'Value for money' implications	
Risk implications	N/A
Community Impact Assessment	Completed and enclosed
Health and safety Implications	N/A
Monitoring Officer/	Monitoring Officer: Further to the Localism Act 2011 local housing authorities are under a duty to prepare and publish a tenancy strategy. The attached Tenancy Strategy sets out how Dacorum meets its obligations under section 150 to 153 of the Localism Act 2011.
S151 Officer comments	Deputy S.151 Officer: There are no financial impacts raised by this strategy update.
Consultees:	Natasha Beresford, Strategic Housing Group Manager

	<p>Lindsey Walsh, Tenancy Team Leader</p> <p>Layna Warden, Tenants & Leaseholders Group Manager</p> <p>Fiona Williamson, Assistant Director Housing</p> <p>Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director of Housing and Regeneration</p> <p>Tenant & Leaseholders Committee</p>
Background papers:	<p>Appendix 1 Draft Tenancy Strategy 2019-2021</p> <p>Appendix 2 Example Service Level Agreement</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviation in the report:	<p>Service Level Agreement (SLA)</p>

Introduction

- 1.1. In accordance with s.150 of the Localism Act a local housing authority in England must prepare and publish a strategy (a “tenancy strategy”) setting out the matters to which the registered providers of social housing for its district are to have regard in formulating policies relating to;
 - (a) the kinds of tenancies they grant,
 - (b) the circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind,
 - (c) where they grant tenancies for a term certain, the lengths of the terms,
 - (d) the circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy.
- 1.2. The aim of the Tenancy Strategy (Appendix 1) is to ensure that the Council has the ability to shape the affordability and security of all social housing properties let to Dacorum residents.
- 1.3. There are a number of factors that form a part of this strategy that will help Dacorum to achieve this, as explained further in this report.

2. Relationships with Registered Providers

- 2.1. The following are the main Registered Providers that have housing stock in the Dacorum borough; Aldwyck, Affinity Sutton, Clarion, Guinness, Hightown, Paradigm, Thrive and Watford Community Housing Trust.
- 2.2. The Council has nomination rights with all of these providers for their Dacorum stock, nomination rights, may vary depending on the development, but typically are 100% on all initial lets and 85 or 75% on re-lets.
- 2.3. It is therefore vital that we ensure that our relationships with our Registered Providers are as productive and robust as possible. In order to achieve this we have been actively engaging with providers that have stock in the borough, to build relationships, share good practice and developing individual Service Level Agreements (SLA) for each organisation.
- 2.4. Whilst these agreements are tailored and shaped based on the size of the Provider and the level of presence they have in the borough they are all formed around some basic core themes that will help us achieve these aims. An example of a typical SLA, can be found at Appendix 2.
- 2.5. They will not only include allocation arrangements linked to original nomination agreements, but also ensure regular liaison meetings between relevant service managers to discuss performance, challenges, analysis of figures, trends and new build development progress.

- 2.6. A regular overview of new build development progress, is crucial to enabling the service to consider ongoing resource needs for this area of work.
- 2.7. In addition to developing robust relationships, the approach also provides Dacorum the opportunity to obtain information on changes or working practices or issues that negatively impact residents.

3. Affordability

- 3.1. Ensuring properties are affordable for residents is a key area of focus.
- 3.2. Historically, whilst still in the bracket of affordable/social housing, Housing Association properties have always been more expensive than Council properties.
- 3.3. We have and continue to work with our Registered Providers to ensure that any property that is advertised and let through us to our residents are let at an affordable rent and therefore are only charged up to a maximum of 80% market rent levels.
- 3.4. A significant number of Registered Providers also charge tenants Rent in Advance at the point of sign up. The amount of this varies according to the policy of the individual organisation. This has been raised as an area of concern and the reality of this being unaffordable for many applicants.
- 3.5. Through developing tailored SLAs with each of our Registered Providers, we are committed to ensuring that any financial payment required in advance is set at an affordable level for our applicants.
- 3.6. This will also alleviate pressure on our budgets, as there are several examples where assistance has been given from the Homeless Prevention Fund to ensure a household can be assisted to obtain a property and pressures alleviated on temporary accommodation.

4. Tenure Type

- 4.1. As a part of this work we have also sought clarification on the types of tenancies being offered by Registered Providers.
- 4.2. This is because we want to ensure that regardless of whether they are allocated a council or Housing Association property, Dacorum residents can expect the same or similar levels of tenure security in their new home.
- 4.3. Typically Registered Providers offer starter/introductory tenancies for one year that are then followed by longer, fixed term tenancies of between 3-7 years. This is a similar approach adopted by Dacorum currently.
- 4.4. We are committed to ensuring this approach continues so the same level of tenure security is applied to all new social housing tenants in the borough, regardless of who their landlord is.
 - We will offer a 12-month introductory tenancy to all new tenants.

- We will offer a secure tenancy to all new supported housing tenants after they successfully complete their introductory period.
- We will offer a flexible tenancy with fixed terms to all new general needs tenants after they successfully complete their introductory period
- In some cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB), the Council can request a court order to demote a tenancy. A demoted tenancy allows the tenant an opportunity to address their ASB. Under a demoted tenancy, the tenant holds the same rights as with an introductory tenancy, so it is easier for the council to proceed with an eviction. A tenancy demotion lasts for 12 months but can be extended for a further six months if required.

5. Allocations Policies

- 5.1. We also want to ensure there is a commonality between our Allocations Policy and that of our partners.
- 5.2. As a part of the work we are doing to develop these Service Level/Partnership Agreements we are ensuring that all partners have access to our Allocations Policy and that we have access to theirs. We can then ensure that any potential areas of contention are addressed and resolved.
- 5.3. Whilst Dacorum does not have the ability to dictate the policies and procedures of our Registered Providers, through the outlined work we are doing we are making it clear that the Council expects that in the interests of partnership working that all providers with landlord responsibilities in the Borough consider the needs, circumstances and requirements of Dacorum residents.
- 5.4. Going forward the service will be further engaging with Registered Providers to encourage them to play a greater role in the advertising and allocation of their properties, a process that is fully administered by the council currently. It is intended that the service will be exploring the opportunity to generate income by enabling the Registered Provider to 'self-serve' using our web-based system.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The work outlined above is already fully under way and we have several Service Level/Partnership Agreements in the final stages of development, this work will continue with current and new providers to ensure a consistent approach.
- 6.2. For Cabinet members to approve at the proposed Tenancy Strategy at Appendix 1.