



AGENDA ITEM: 12

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	11 November 2015
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	YOUNG PERSONS' HOUSING STRATEGY 2016 - 2020
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing Julia Hedger – Strategic Housing Group Manager Isabel Connolly – Policy and Participation Team Leader
Purpose of report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To bring to the Committee the new draft Young Persons' Housing Strategy 2016 - 2020 (Appendix 1) for feedback before going to Cabinet to gain approval to enter a formal six week consultation period.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the Committee to consider the content of the new draft strategy document and give their feedback.
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>There are no financial commitments made in the strategy, and the majority of the strategy relates to focusing, targeting, and maximising benefits from existing resources.</p> <p>The strategy commits to exploring options to use some of its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets in different ways. These could have some financial implications in order to be achieved and therefore the strategy recognises that an options appraisal with financial information would be required before</p>

	<p>proceeding.</p> <p>Customer profiling commitments in the strategy feed into a larger piece of work in the housing service plan for 2016/17 that has already been budgeted for.</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs to the Council <p>This strategy sets out evidence that younger age groups are currently presenting a direct cost to the Council due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The likelihood of experiencing housing need or homelessness; and - Difficulties sustaining council tenancies and likelihood of having rent arrears. <p>Reorganising / refocusing some of the housing service's resources to target factors associated with these costs would produce a savings benefit to the Council in terms of improved income collection rates and reduced homelessness.</p> <p>This sits within a wider context of trying to use evidence to focus resources on preventable causes of costs, as part of a move to make the housing service more proactive, flexible, and sophisticated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Wider economic costs</u> <p>The Council recognises the importance of its young people to its future economic success.</p> <p>The current housing market in Dacorum presents specific challenges to younger people at the start of their adult lives and careers. Young individuals and families in unsuitable housing, or without suitable support to maintain a tenancy successfully, may experience high levels of anxiety in relation to their housing and financial situation, which may have knock on effects on many areas of life, including employment prospects, children's wellbeing, and household health. These effects have costs for the wider economic performance of Dacorum.</p> <p>Value for money savings can therefore be achieved through recognition of the needs of this group and focusing resources effectively.</p>
Risk Implications	<p>There are both direct cost and wider economic risks to the Council if it does not respond to the evidence about younger people and their capacity to resolve their housing need and sustain tenancies within Dacorum.</p> <p>There is a financial risk to 'doing-nothing' and this strategy identifies how the Council can make use of its resources to</p>

	invest-to-save.
Equalities Implications	<p>This strategy has been developed to address the disproportionate level of younger people in the borough who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experiencing homelessness • struggling to resolve their own housing need • struggling to sustain their tenancy
Health And Safety Implications	<p>If any new uses of housing assets are considered in order to meet this strategy's commitments, then the health and safety of buildings and their geographical position will need to be assessed.</p>
Consultees:	<p>Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Mark Gaynor – Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration</p> <p>Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing</p> <p>Andy Vincent – Group Manager for Tenants and Leaseholders</p> <p>Natasha Brathwaite – Group Manager for Strategic Housing</p> <p>Strategic partners at the Council's Homeless Forum</p> <p>The planned six week consultation that this report is proposing would target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners of the housing service • Tenants and leaseholders (in partnership with the formal committees) • Housing register applicants
Background papers:	<p>Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018</p> <p>Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018</p> <p>Vulnerable Persons' Strategy 2014 - 17</p> <p>Older Persons' Housing Strategy 2014 - 2020</p> <p>Housing Allocations Policy 2015</p> <p>Localism Act 2011</p> <p>The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011)</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

1. **Background**

- 1.1 This strategy covers the Council's full housing offer (managing homelessness and providing temporary accommodation, managing the housing register, and the management of tenancies and assets as a landlord).
[NB: This does not include the Environmental Health role in enforcement of conditions in the private rented sector].
- 1.2 This strategy has been developed at a time when homelessness is rising again in Dacorum, and the Council has to think seriously about how it responds to this rise, both in terms of managing households and managing assets.
- 1.3 The strategy sets out evidence that there are disproportionate levels of younger people in the borough who are:
 - experiencing homelessness
 - struggling to resolve their own housing need
 - struggling to sustain their tenancy
- 1.4 Younger people of any generation have challenges specific to that stage in their life: lower incomes from employment (or no income from employment) compared to later on in their careers; young families with child care costs; multiple priorities including care for older parents; little or no savings (or other investments); and less experience of managing household budgets.
- 1.5 Housing need is high in Dacorum, with around a quarter of the borough's 18-24 year olds on the active housing register, and therefore in some form of housing need.
- 1.6 Younger households are struggling to manage in their own home, with around 70% of 18 – 24 year olds in the Council's housing stock found to be in some level of rent arrears. The proportion of an age group in arrears decreases as age increases in a clear correlation.
- 1.7 The Council is investing in new ways of working that will hopefully make some housing management transactions easier and less resource intensive (online forms, digital payments and other transactions, re-designed processes to make cross-team processes more efficient, etc). This presents an opportunity for the housing service to develop itself and adopt a more flexible and proactive form of service delivery.
- 1.8 The Council is facing the prospect of increasing numbers in temporary accommodation, likely to be predominantly younger age groups. Experiences in temporary accommodation are formative in terms of a household's approach to managing a future, more secure home. How we manage and support these families will therefore become increasingly important. People's time in temporary accommodation is an opportunity for the Council to engage with households and help them build skills for the future.
- 1.9 Preventing crises occurring for young individuals and families will produce savings to the Council in terms of direct costs and wider economic benefits. The risks of 'doing nothing' are significant. Dacorum's younger population is important to creating a thriving borough with a vibrant community and low unemployment rate.

- 1.10 This strategy references the corporate vision and objectives 2012 – 2015. The final draft after consultation will be updated to align this strategy to the new corporate plan due to be adopted, which will commence in 2016.

2. The objectives

- 2.1 The strategy objectives have been identified as those necessary to push the housing service forward to better meet the needs of younger people across the borough in terms of suitable housing and sustaining tenancies.

- 2.2 This Young Persons' Housing Strategy commits the Council to meeting four strategic objectives, which are:

- To be able to respond to a young person's needs and get their housing pathway right
- To have an approach to tenancy sustainment that reflects challenges specific to young people
- To have an effective communications plan that engages young people
- To understand the data and information we have and need in order to make informed decisions about shaping the service to meet the needs of young people

- 2.3 To ensure the Council meets these objectives this strategy will be supported by an action plan that will be developed as part of during the six week consultation.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 The Council is working with its partners to develop this strategy, and will use forums including its Homeless Forum to have detailed discussion.

- 3.2 The Council has a planning session arranged with its tenant and leaseholder formal committees to plan consultation with the tenant and leaseholder population.

- 3.3 The Council will also hold consultation sessions with applicants from its housing register.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 For the Committee to consider the content of the new draft strategy document and give their feedback.