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# Housing Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Report for:</b>	Housing Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Title of report:</b>	Decant policy
<b>Date:</b>	15 March 2023
<b>Report on behalf of:</b>	Councillor Mrs Margaret Griffiths Portfolio Holder for Housing
<b>Part:</b>	I
<b>If Part II, reason:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 Decant Policy Appendix 2 Emergency Decant procedure Appendix 3 Planned Decant procedure
<b>Background papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b>	Tenants and Leaseholders Committee (TLC)

## Report Author / Responsible Officer

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<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery
<b>Wards affected</b>	ALL
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Provide information outlining the approach to decants</li><li>2. Inform Members of the revised policy approach in relation to decants</li></ol>

<b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide feedback regarding the approach and policy development</li> <li>2. Support recommendation to Cabinet to implement the policy</li> </ol>
<b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>	Annually or upon legislative change

## **1 Introduction/Background:**

The council are required, at times, to move tenants from their homes to enable work to be carried out to the property, this is called a Decant.

This report introduces the draft Decant policy 2023 which replaces the previous policy relating to decants, dated 2018.

## **2 Key Issues/proposals/main body of the report:**

This section highlights the key areas of the revised Decant Policy.

### Permanent transfer, planned decant. Emergency decant:

There are different circumstances where tenants need to move out of their property to allow work to be completed. The draft Decant Policy 2023 defines the three distinct circumstances.

### Suitable alternate accommodation:

The policy defines our approach to offering alternate accommodation. The council will try to provide a property of the same size to the one the household is required to leave. Where a permanent transfer is required there is a commitment not to move tenants to a different size property unless there is statutory overcrowding. Where a household needs to move permanently and is under occupying a property, we will offer the 'Help to Move' payment alongside the decant assistance payment.

### Household members:

The Policy clarifies that the primary focus when facilitating a decant is for the safe relocation of the affected household and that only permanent members of the household will be considered as part of the decant. It states that assistance pets that the households has been given permission to keep, will be found alternate accommodation. With regard to household pets, the Council do not take responsibility to rehousing them. However, when a household requests permission to keep a pet, part of the process will be to ask them to include what arrangements are in place in the event of an emergency.

### Financial help with moving:

Our approach to providing financial support to households through the Decant process is outlined in the policy. The Policy describes the following financial support and in which circumstances these would be applied:

- Disturbance payments (Statutory)<sup>7</sup>
- Home Loss Payments (Statutory)
- Home Loss Payments (Discretionary)<sup>7</sup>

### Right to return:

The Policy clarifies the legal right that tenants have to return to their property where major works are required. It goes on to clarify that where this is not possible, the council will work with, and support households, to provide options for suitable alternate accommodation.

### Decanting non DBC tenants:

The policy clarifies there is no automatic responsibility on the council to decant those that are not tenants of Dacorum. It does however confirm that should there be a need for any major work to a leasehold or shared ownership property, this would be picked up Section 20 process. The Section 20 process is the process by which landlords consult with leaseholders regarding any major works that are due to be carried out.

Further to this should there be a need for a leaseholder or shared owner to move, consultation with those effected will start at the earliest opportunity.

#### Review of working practices:

To support the review of the Decant policy, work was undertaken by the key services to review the approach to managing the Decant process. It was identified there was a need to reduce the number of officers involved to provide accountability and improve customer service. Underpinning this was a review of the procedures used to manage emergency decants (Appendix 2) and planned decants (Appendix 3).

### **3 Options and alternatives considered**

Alternative options have not been considered. It is necessary for the Council to update and refresh regularly upon material or legislative change its policies to ensure that they remain compliant with the statutory framework and adequately inform all stakeholders of the Council's approach.

### **4 Consultation**

A review of the decant process was carried out that sought the view of those teams actively involved in the process. It also involved speaking to tenants who had been through the process, alongside a review of complaints received relating to decants.

During the process of developing the Decant Policy, the Tenants and Leaseholders Committee (TLC) were consulted. A further, targeted session with the TLC is due to be arranged to provide feedback on some of the points that were raised.

### **5 Financial and value for money implications:**

Effective delivery of the decant process has a positive impact on resources. Provision for moving people due to the need to decant is contained in the current budget and this is managed within service. Alternate options, such as exploring the opportunity to use 'nightly let's' or having a more structured approach to use of Hotels for short term decants will be explored and the financial implications determined.

### **6 Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications arising from the development of this policy.

### **7 Risk implications:**

A robust policy approach, provides reassurance that the Council has appropriate governance and processes in place to support households when they are required to move out of a property for works to be carried out.

### **8 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

A Community Impact assessment is currently being completed with regard to the Decant Policy.

### **9 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)**

There are no sustainability issues arising from the development of this policy.

### **10 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)**

There are no council infrastructure issues arising from the development of this policy.

### **11 Conclusions:**

This report outlines the intention to introduce the revised Decant Policy, providing clear direction as to the approach that will be undertaken by the Council when carrying out the Decant process.