



'Get Involved'

Dacorum Borough Council Tenant Involvement Strategy
2016 - 2020





Foreword

Asset Management foreword tbc

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1.0 Introduction

2.0 Our vision

We want our tenants to feel listened to, empowered to influence decisions and have opportunities for them to challenge us

1.0 Introduction

This strategy includes an overview of the Dacorum Borough Council Housing Service's approach to tenant involvement.

Together with our tenants we have defined tenant involvement as *'the involvement of tenants in the management, design and delivery of services'*.

Using a wide range of activities and different levels of involvement we will demonstrate how we will draw on the diverse skills, knowledge, and experiences of our tenants to improve the housing service we deliver.

For the purposes of this strategy the term 'tenant' refers to all residents living in Dacorum Borough Council owned properties or accessing the council's housing service. This includes:

- Tenants
- Leaseholders
- All family members of tenants living in the property
- Homeless applicants
- Those living in temporary accommodation

2.0 Our vision

To deliver a great Housing service, Dacorum Borough Council is committed to listening to our tenants, empowering them to influence decisions and creating opportunities for them to challenge us.

Using the *'Get Involved'* strategy we will work together with local people to ensure our tenants receive a quality service that is value for money and meets in their needs.

This strategy supports the councils corporate vision of *'...working in partnership to create a borough that enables Dacorum's communities to thrive and prosper'*.

Tenant involvement encourages us to reflect on what we are delivering, helping us to work towards more efficient and modern services. As both a local authority and a landlord it is our priority that our tenants live in strong and vibrant communities that enjoy safe and clean environments. Working with our tenants, we can continue to provide good quality affordable homes, particularly to those in need and ensure the economic growth and prosperity of our borough.



3.0 The importance of involving tenants

We not only need to consider the housing needs of our tenants but their overall quality of life.



3.0 The importance of involving tenants

Keeping tenants informed of decisions that affect their housing situation and offering consultation has become more of a priority for all social landlords including local authorities.

Tenants' roles have continued to grow and in 2012 it became a requirement for every landlord to create a formal scrutiny panel(s). This allows people to highlight opportunities to improve, challenge and scrutinise delivery of housing services and act as representatives for the wider population.

Our responsibility as a landlord is to support tenants to 'Get Involved' and create a range of opportunities for involvement. Through involved tenants we are able to create a two way conversation, helping tenants to stay involved and informed about changes to the Housing Service that affect them. We are also able to draw on the skills, knowledge and experiences of our tenants.

3.2 Our tenant population

Dacorum has a population of 147,747 in total, over 60,000 households. The council owns over 10,400 properties in Dacorum meaning around 23,500 of Dacorum's population would be considered council tenants.

Within Dacorum there are a small number of deprived areas. Most of these areas are within Hemel Hempstead and are areas with a high density of council owned homes. We understand there are several factors that contribute to people being considered deprived and through tenant involvement can help to both recognise and remove these barriers.

Our role as a local authority and a landlord means it is important for us to build relationships with our tenants to better understand their needs. Current trends such as an aging population, a rise in homelessness and an increase in overcrowding means we not only need to consider the housing needs of our tenants but their overall quality of life.

Through tenant involvement we can achieve this.

4.0 Commitment to delivering a great service

4.0 Delivering a great service

The council's housing service works to deliver a great service for all its tenants and leaseholders. To achieve this it is important to understand what is to our tenants see as a priority and how we can improve opportunities for them to share this.

4.1 Equality and diversity

As a housing service we believe all council tenants should have the opportunity to 'Get Involved' regardless of; age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation (Equality and Diversity Act 2010) and are committed to being inclusive with our approach to tenant involvement. We recognise that some people and groups within our tenant population find it difficult to have their voice heard. By tailoring our opportunities of involvement we hope to encourage these tenants to have their say.

To support this we are committed to reviewing the housing service using the Chartered Institute of Housing's Equality and Diversity Charter. This will allow us to give our tenants a voice and remove barriers that not only stop them from being involved but impact their lives.

4.2 Value for money

It is important to us that our tenants feel they are getting value for money. The council along with tenant representatives will monitor the cost for delivering tenant involvement and ensure this is delivered effectively.

Sharing resources and skills with partner organisations and exploring opportunities for additional funding will also help us to deliver more for less.

Working towards the four commitments set out in this strategy we will:

- Monitor the impact of tenant involvement for tenants and the housing service
- Be transparent in the cost of tenant involvement and identify where this has led to savings and improvements

4.3 Delivering a better service

To demonstrate how this strategy will improve DBC's tenant involvement, the council is committed to working with our tenants to achieve the TPAS Landlord Accreditation. This accreditation will support the councils housing service to enhance the experience of our tenants and strengthens our overall vision of putting tenants at the center of our service.



5.0 The ‘Get Involved’ commitments

Over 100 tenants and leaseholders helped to develop this strategy

“It gives people an opportunity to be involved at a level that suits them.”

5.0 The ‘Get Involved’ commitments

The council recognises the importance of reviewing our approach to tenant involvement as it allows us to know, understand and respond to current and future tenant’s needs To develop this strategy, the tenant involvement team held a variety of focus groups where tenants were encouraged to share their thoughts on involvement.

The information gained during these focus groups allowed us to understand our role in supporting tenants to ‘Get Involved’. Through the STAR Survey we were able to shape this further by using feedback from tenants on their experience of our service. From this we have developed four commitments:

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



6.0 The 'Get Involved' structure

- Our Tenants
- Service Shapers
- Official Involvement

6.0 The 'Get Involved' structure...

To achieve the commitments set out in this strategy and the TPAS Accreditation, The council's housing service has developed a structure that allows tenants to 'Get Involved' in a variety of ways. The structure includes three levels of involvement; *Our Tenants*, *Service Shapers* and *Official Involvement*. All areas within this structure will be reviewed yearly.

Level One 'Our Tenants': 'Our Tenants' is about developing conversations between the council's housing service and the whole tenant population. By using a range of communication channels such as the development of social media and getting out and about in the community we will build better relationships and improve how we communicate with our tenants.

Level Two 'Service Shapers': 'Service Shapers' is an adaptable approach to involving tenants that focuses on specific topic areas. Within this level of involvement activities such as 'burst groups' allows tenants more flexibility to 'Get Involved' as it is often achieved over a short period of time. Other activities within 'Service Shapers' include 'Youth Tenant Involvement' and 'Tenant Inspectors' where individuals within the tenant population can take part in projects that benefit the wider tenant community.

Level Three 'Official Involvement': 'Official involvement' brings together tenant and leaseholder representatives, local professionals, Councillors and the council's housing staff to regulate, scrutinise and challenge the housing service. This level of involvement includes a Housing Co-Regulatory Overview Committee and Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel. All are required to meet on a quarterly basis and review key areas of the housing service.



Having a range of activities for people to 'Get Involved' means we will have a more active tenant community

You can have your say no matter how much time you have to give

6.1 The following diagram shows the three levels of involvements and activities that will be delivered within each level.



7.0 Getting our tenants involved

All Dacorum tenants and leaseholders have the opportunity to *'Get Involved'*



7.0 Getting our tenants involved

Dacorum Borough Council recognises that this strategy is a step towards an even more active and involved tenant community.

To successfully deliver the four commitments within this strategy the housing involvement team will work with tenants, partner organisations and members of staff to develop a programme of events.

We will create a shared understanding of tenant involvement that both staff and tenants can relate too, using training and campaigns to raise awareness of *'Get Involved'*.

When involving tenants we will be open, consistent and clear on the reasons for involving them and respect tenant's choice to be involved.

Working to include the widest possible range of tenants we will help tenants to overcome any barriers to involvement.

We will value the contribution, expertise and time our tenants give and give feedback on how they have influenced our way of working.

7.1 Commitment One - All Dacorum tenants and leaseholders have the opportunity to *'Get Involved'*

Commitment one of *'Get Involved'* looks to improve access for our tenants. By improving access we can also increase the number of tenants influencing our service. This will allow us to capture thoughts and experiences that better represent the wider tenant population.

To achieve this we will:

- Improve our digital channels such as social media to increase opportunities for conversations with tenants
- Ensure all *'Get Involved'* opportunities are held in appropriate venues and at a time that allows a range of tenants to attend
- Support tenants with specific needs to *'Get Involved'* and promote equality and diversity throughout the housing service
- Build opportunities for all tenants regardless of how much time they can commit to *'Get Involved'*
- Develop the skills of our tenants so they can actively participate in all three levels of *'Get Involved'*

Dacorum Borough Council works in partnership to ensure the housing service is shaped by the needs of our tenants and leaseholders

Young people within Dacorum's tenant and leaseholder population have a voice and a positive influence in their local communities

7.2 Commitment Two - Dacorum Borough Council works in partnership to ensure the housing service is shaped by the needs of our tenants and leaseholders

Commitment Two of *'Get Involved'* emphasises the importance of knowing our tenants. Understanding not just the needs of our tenants but what is important to them means we can target both our support and information where it is relevant. The aim is to improve tenants experience by offering a more personalised and tailored service.

To achieve this we will:

- Work with tenants to collect and update information that will allow us to build a better picture of their needs
- Create opportunities for tenants to tell us what is important to them and use this to develop the housing service
- Develop a better understanding of how our tenants prefer to be communicated with
- Use the knowledge we have to target support to tenants that need it
- Work with tenants to develop ideas from the beginning so we can get it right first time

7.3 Commitment Three - Young people within Dacorum's tenant and leaseholder population have a voice and a positive influence in their local communities

Commitment three of *'Get Involved'* shows the importance involving young people in the housing service. By involving young people we can not only empower them to have a voice but using this relationship we as a landlord can equip young people with new skills, knowledge and understanding to support them in the future.

To achieve this we will:

- Help young people to recognise the benefits of being involved and support them to develop new skills
- Be proactive in sharing information about Housing and how this affects younger people within our tenant population
- Give young people the tools to prepare for the future so they are equipped to make informed decisions that affect their lives
- Create opportunities with young people to create a feeling of community for our tenants
- Encourage young people to break down barriers that affect our tenant population

Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service is accountable to our tenants and leaseholders

8.0 Conclusion

7.4 Commitment Four - Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service is accountable to our tenants and leaseholders

Commitment four of *'Get Involved'* acknowledges our tenants right to understand the decisions we make. It is important to us as a landlord to give our tenants the best service experience possible. With our commitment to continuously improving our service we can use the knowledge, experience and skills within our tenant population to drive the service forward.

To achieve this we will:

- Develop a Housing Co-Regulatory Overview Committee to review our performance, the use of our budget and shape our service plans
- Refresh our Tenants and Leaseholders Scrutiny Panel and use the panel to keep tenants at the centre through in-depth reviews of our service
- Demonstrate how we as a Landlord have achieved value for money for our tenants
- Showcase the impact our involved tenants have within the housing service
- Encourage tenants to challenge, shape and improve our service through a range of communication channels.

8.0 Conclusion

Within the *'Get Involved'* Strategy, Dacorum Borough Council commits to listening to our tenants and working in partnership with them to deliver a great housing service that provides value for money.

Using a range of activities we will create a diverse involved tenant community that helps us to develop a better understanding of what our tenants need. By creating a range of involvement opportunities *'all Dacorum Tenants and Leaseholders have the opportunity to Get Involved'*. Through information and listening to our tenants we will *'work in partnership to ensure the Housing Service is shaped by the needs of our tenants'* Improving our digital communication channels and empowering young people to break down barriers we will ensure *'young people within Dacorum's tenant population have a voice and a positive influence in their local communities'*

And finally, by refreshing tenants' opportunities for official involvement we will ensure Dacorum Borough Council's housing service is accountable to our tenants and leaseholders. Through tenant involvement our tenants can live in strong, vibrant communities where they have a voice and feel listened to. Working together, we can continue to provide well managed, affordable homes for those in need and ensure the wellbeing of our tenants.