



'Get involved'

Dacorum Borough Council Tenant involvement strategy
2016 - 2020





Foreword

I am delighted to introduce our new ‘*Get involved*’ strategy for 2016 – 2020.

This strategy sets out our commitment to working with our tenants and leaseholders so we can continue to find smarter way to deliver a great housing service.

I have worked with many of our involved tenants and leaseholders and their role is vital in creating long lasting change for the wider community. In a time where the demand for housing continues to increase the need to listen to our tenants and understand how we can support them has become ever more important.

That is why this strategy and new structure for delivering tenant involvement is centred on giving everyone a say.

Councillor Margaret Griffiths

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1.0 Introduction

2.0 Our vision

1.0 Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council has a long history of working closely with its tenants and leaseholders to make informed decisions. Building strong working relationships with our involved tenants enables us to deliver a sustainable service that meets local housing need.

This four year strategy sets out how we will continue to work together to deliver a great housing service.

We have defined tenant involvement as *'the involvement of tenants and leaseholders in the management, design and delivery of our services'*.

Within this strategy, we set out a new vision and set of outcome based commitments for tenant involvement. To deliver this successfully, we have worked with over 1,000 of our involved tenants and leaseholders to develop a new structure of involvement activities.

This new structure channels the diverse skills, knowledge, and experiences held within our tenant and leaseholder population, into the core of our service delivery. Through effective governance, customer insight, channel shift and engagement this strategy showcases how we as a landlord will deliver value for money whilst improving our tenants and leaseholders quality of life.

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 and those living in temporary accommodation

2.0 Our vision

To deliver a great housing service our vision is for our tenants to feel listened to, empowered to influence decisions and have the opportunity to challenge us.

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 Tenant involvement

3.1 Tenant involvement

Keeping tenants informed of decisions that affect their housing situation has become 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.

Increases in demand for housing and limited resources mean smarter solutions to meeting needs are essential.

This strategy emphasises several factors we feel create good quality tenant involvement, these are; communication, customer insight, engagement, innovation, scrutiny and influence.

Through effective communication, we can keep our tenants informed and manage expectation. Customer insight means we can begin to build a better understanding of the social and economic issues affecting our tenants and work in partnership to tackle these. Using innovation such as digital channels means we can improve their experience of our service and learn from the feedback we receive. Robust scrutiny allows us to focus the skills of our involved tenants and use their perspective to drive performance.

The ability to influence is what matters most to our tenant population. All levels of involvement set out within this strategy include the ability to influence. Over the four years of this strategy, we will capture the impact each of our involved tenants had in transforming the housing service.

3.2 Our tenant population

In Dacorum, there are approximately 60,000 properties housing over 147,000 people. Dacorum Borough Council owns over 10,400 of these properties and is responsible for 1,700 leasehold properties. In April 2016, there were approximately 10,000 people on the housing register. This means around 33,500 people are directly affected by the service we deliver.

We know that housing is key to improving a person's quality of life.

Changes in local need such as; an aging population, a rise in homelessness and managing the balance between under occupancy and overcrowding, highlight the demand for a more holistic service.

Through tenant involvement we can achieve this.



4.0 Delivering a great service



4.1 Delivering a great service

This strategy has been developed to align with all relevant current statutory legislation and best practice guidance.

4.2 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 will empower these tenants to have their say.

Using the Chartered Institute of Housing's Equality and Diversity charter we are working with our tenants to review the housing service we offer. Using information and insight we can ensure our tenant involvement opportunities are communicated in the right way to the right target audience. We will ensure wherever possible our opportunities for involvement are reflective of our tenant and leaseholder population.

4.3 Value for money

It is important that we deliver value for money for our tenants. Taking an outcome focused approach to engagement and scrutiny we can capture where improvements have been made as a result of tenant involvement and any associated costs or savings.

Shaping our annual service plans using our tenants' priorities helps us to allocate our resources and deliver what is important. We will work with our tenants to identify more efficient ways of working, such as moving to digital channels enabling us to maximise the resources available. Sharing resources and skills with partner organisations and exploring opportunities for additional funding will also help us to deliver more for less.

4.4 Setting the standard

In the first year of delivering this strategy, the housing service will achieve the National Tenant Engagement Standards developed by Tpas. This strategy aims to fulfil the first standard by building the right foundation for engagement. We will ensure that we have the right resources to deliver effective tenant involvement and work in partnership to develop the skills of our involved tenants and leaseholders so we as a housing service can deliver the right outcomes.

We will commit to gathering, providing and using the right information using customer insight. By pooling together the information from a range of stakeholders will enable us to make informed decisions on how best to support our tenants and deliver a successful and sustainable service.

4.0 continued

5.0 Our commitments



Using this information to underpin our outcomes, we can go on to evidence the impact tenant involvement has for our tenant and leaseholder population.

Through our three levels of involvement we will empower tenants to influence and scrutinise our service and be a key driver of performance and quality management.

The partnership between Dacorum Borough Council and Osborne Property Services as part of the Total Asset Management contract allows us to take a joint approach to delivering community engagement. Through this partnership we can develop grass roots initiatives based on the needs of our tenants which go on to benefit the wider population of Dacorum and build strong and vibrant communities.

Throughout the four years we will use tools such as Social Return on Investment to monitor and capture the value added to the council, our stakeholders, partners and most importantly our tenant and leaseholder population.

5.1 Our commitments

To develop this strategy we included the views of over 1200 tenants and leaseholders, staff and stakeholders. Activities such as focus groups enabled tenants to share their thoughts on involvement.

Through the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) we were able to shape this further by identifying trends within our tenants' satisfaction and experiences of the service.

From this we have developed four outcome based commitments:

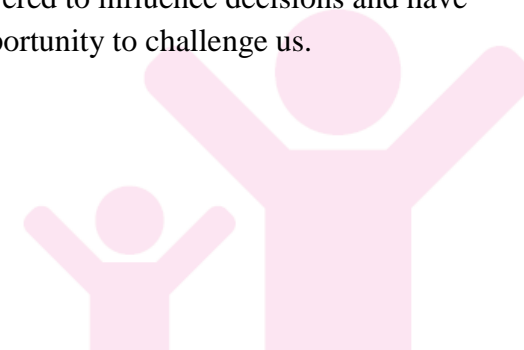
Commitment One: All Dacorum tenants and leaseholders have the opportunity to 'Get involved'

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

These commitments will underpin this strategy and ultimately enable us to deliver our vision of tenants and leaseholder feel listened to, empowered to influence decisions and have the opportunity to challenge us.



6.0 Delivering tenant involvement



6.1 The ‘Get involved’ structure

To deliver tenant involvement in Dacorum, a new structure has been developed. The structure includes three levels of involvement; *Our Tenants, Service Shapers and Official Involvement*. These different levels include a wide variety of involvement activities meaning there is something for everyone. Each level was developed using what we know has worked well and an exploration of new ideas for the future.

6.2 Level One ‘Our Tenants’

‘Our Tenants’ is about creating conversations and building relationships between the council’s housing service and the whole tenant population. Using a range of communication channels such as social media and getting out and about in the community we can keep our tenants informed, share the benefits tenant involvement has for them and begin to build a network of people who want to ‘Get involved’.

6.3 Level Two ‘Service Shapers’

‘Service Shapers’ then uses a variety of engagement activities to build up a picture of our tenants needs. Within this level of involvement activities such as ‘burst groups’ we can introduce topics of interest and capture tenants and leaseholders thought and experiences.

The information and insight captured at level two then informs the development of key documents or decisions.

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.

6.4 Level Three ‘Official Involvement’

‘Official involvement’ is the top level of involvement and requires the most commitment from our tenants and leaseholders. It 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 Tenant and Leaseholder Committee and Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel. All are required to meet on a quarterly basis and review key areas of the housing service.

This top level committee will also be used as a formal part of any consultation process. Information collated at level two and the documents drafted using this information will be presented to committee members digitally for feedback to ensure the decision and or service change is reflective of local need.

6.0 Delivering tenant involvement

Level Three – Official Involvement

Tenant and Leaseholder Committee

Tenants and Leaseholders Scrutiny Panel

Level Two – Service Shapers

Burst Groups

Youth Tenant Involvement

Regular Forums

Tenant Inspectors

Level One – Our Tenants

Tenant Community
Events

Communication
Channels

Pop-Up Housing
Surgeries

Consultation

Roadshows

Workshops

7.0 'Get involved'

7.1 'Get involved'

Dacorum Borough Council recognises that this strategy is about creating the right foundations for 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 a 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.



7.2 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'

7.0 continued



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 and services

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. Through tenant involvement and wider engagement we can empower our young people to have a voice and gain new skills, 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

7.0 continued

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:

- Re-launch the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee to review our performance, the use of our budget and shape our service plans
- Refresh our Tenant and Leaseholder 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.