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## **FOREWORD**

### **Leader of the Council**

The Council has done its best to give you modern homes and good quality services and we are proud of what we have achieved. However, the Council is now in a position where it can no longer afford to keep up its current level of services, carry out the standard of repairs and improvements you have told us you want and plan enough investment for the future.

We know many tenants do not want their landlord or housing service to change but remaining the same is not possible. The choice our tenants have in respect of the future of the housing service is stark.

We are aware that the Government is currently looking at the way that Council, housing finance is controlled at a national level. We do not believe that the Governments proposals will increase the amount of money the Council can spend on your home or provide the certainty that Dacorum Community Gateway would be able to.

The Council believes that transfer to Dacorum Community Gateway offers the best solution. It enables the Council to meet all of its objectives for the housing service, while giving tenants the improvements they have told us they want together and have a greater say in running the housing service. Transfer would mean better homes, better services and better estates and an end to cut-backs and the uncertainty you would face with the Council.

The Council has worked closely with tenants to develop the proposals outlined in this Offer Document and would not be proposing this transfer to you, unless it was confident that Dacorum Community Gateway would be focussed on meeting the aims and ambitions of tenants and leaseholders and the wider community.

### **Chair of Tenant Steering Group**

Our Council decided right from the start that it wanted tenants and leaseholders to be involved in and developing the detail of this transfer proposal. Our steering group members were recruited following an interview by a panel of tenants and leaseholders drawn from throughout the Borough including Housing Advisory Panel (HAP) members. Although the Council supported this selection process they did not choose us.

The group was made up of 20 tenants and two resident leaseholders.

Early in the project we appointed our own Independent Tenants Advisor (ITA) from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) which has advised us and helped us to negotiate the best possible offer. TPAS has also been available throughout the project to offer us professional independent advice and answer any questions from tenants and leaseholders. We have been able to draw upon their specialist financial and legal services to help us to support the development of this offer.

Our group has been at the heart of the transfer proposal from the beginning, which began with recommending to the Council that a transfer is the best option for the future of our homes.

Following a series of visits to different types of new housing transfer landlords, we also recommended to the Council that it develops the proposed new landlord on the basis of a Community Gateway model. This is a relatively new type of social landlord which, unlike traditional forms of housing association, is owned exclusively by tenants and resident leaseholders. We have been very impressed and enthused by meeting residents from other areas which have adopted this model of landlord. We have been consulted about the proposed detail and have negotiated many of the aspects that are in this offer document through meetings and consultation events on the proposed policies and service improvements we feel would benefit all tenants and leaseholders.

We believe that Dacorum Community Gateway would be in a great position to deliver the following:

- ❑ Genuine empowerment at all levels of the organisation for tenants and resident leaseholders.
- ❑ A much bigger programme of repairing and improving homes than is possible with the Council.
- ❑ Greater control and management of repairs
- ❑ Increased financial budgets for basic and large scale improvements currently on hold
- ❑ Efficient and effective services that represent good value for money.
- ❑ An entirely new culture of residents working in partnership with staff to produce the best service for everyone. A locally accountable and accessible organisation which embraces equality and diversity at its heart.
- ❑ An improvement in the delivery of the housing and maintenance services.

We all want to live in well maintained modern and genuinely affordable homes in safe and pleasant neighbourhoods. The very nature of Dacorum Community Gateway would ensure that tenants and leaseholders can get real empowerment in decision making at all levels.

Although transfer would have very little impact on leaseholders we want you to consider the proposals put forward carefully and use your opportunity to feedback your consultation comments. Your feedback comments will be carefully considered. If you are unsure about anything contained in this document or would like further information please get in touch with the Council or our Independent Tenants' Advisor (TPAS) and they will be happy to help you. Their contact details can be found in Section Fourteen.

### **Chair of Dacorum Community Gateway Shadow Board**

We believe that Dacorum Community Gateway would be more than just a good landlord. Unlike more traditional forms of housing organisations, it would be owned *exclusively* by you.

To deliver improvements to your homes and neighbourhoods we would have the benefit of the professional expertise and commitment of the housing staff, who would transfer to Dacorum Community Gateway. You would deal with the same people under the transfer that you do now.

We want tenants and resident leaseholders to bring their experience and talent to Dacorum Community Gateway. This is central to the philosophy and ethos of a community gateway organisation. We believe that by working in partnership with the Council and other organisations we can bring about a fundamental and positive impact on estates and neighbourhoods throughout the Borough.

The Shadow Board has a range of experience and skills which would mean Dacorum Community Gateway would be run efficiently and professionally. Our vision is to be a community empowered, tenant and resident leaseholder owned housing provider working in partnership with the Council and other organisations and our focus would be on delivering an effective and affordable housing service which promotes individual and collective responsibility for the benefit of the whole community. We would actively promote resident empowerment through a range of opportunities for tenants and resident leaseholders to get involved including getting as many residents to become members as possible.

As the most significant social housing provider in Dacorum we recognise we would not only have a responsibility to the residents of today but also to the residents of tomorrow.

Our commitment to you is to deliver the promises the Council has made to you in this Offer Document together with focussing on the participation and empowerment of tenants and resident leaseholders and ensuring you have a say in how Dacorum Community Gateway would deliver its housing service.

## **THE TRANSFER HEADLINES**

- One.** There would be a budget of £184 million for the first six years to bring homes up to a new Dacorum Community Gateway Standard; this is the equivalent of £17,500 per home. The Council expects that it will only be able to spend £127 million over the same period or £12,000 per home.
- Two.** Dacorum Community Gateway would deliver services tailored to the needs of its tenants and leaseholders taking into account age, disability and ethnicity.
- Three.** Dacorum Community Gateway would be tenant and resident leaseholder owned. This means that tenants and leaseholders would have a greater say about how money is spent in the future.
- Four.** Dacorum Community Gateway would work closely with the Council which would continue to provide a range of services such as providing housing advice, dealing with homelessness and the housing list and administering housing benefit.

## **SECTION ONE**

### **Summary of the Councils transfer proposal**

#### **At a glance:**

- ❑ The Council has worked in partnership with the Tenant Steering Group and leaseholder forum to develop Dacorum Community Gateway and this document.
- ❑ Secure and Introductory tenants will be given a vote on the proposal in a ballot planned for early next year and a transfer can only happen if the majority of tenants who vote, vote for the transfer.
- ❑ Leaseholders are also being consulted and you will have your own ballot. The Council will consider the feedback from leaseholders although it is tenants that have the final say. The reason for this is that the change of landlord is a material change in circumstances for tenants. But the relationship of leaseholders to the new landlord is determined by the lease which does not change. Leaseholders will continue to have recourse to the leasehold valuation tribunal in the event of any dispute with the landlord.
- ❑ For now the Council wants to hear what you think about the proposal.

#### **What is the Council proposing?**

The Council is proposing to transfer all its homes to a new, not for profit, local housing organisation called Dacorum Community Gateway which would be owned by tenants and resident leaseholders. During the last 20 years over 200 other Councils across the UK have already transferred all or part of their housing to housing associations to improve and modernise them. According to the National Housing Federation this has allowed more than £14 billion to be invested in affordable housing between 1988 and 2008.

Transfer of homes can only happen if the majority of tenants who vote, vote for the transfer.

#### **What is Dacorum Community Gateway?**

Dacorum Community Gateway is a new, not for profit, independent housing organisation which would be owned by tenants through a membership scheme in which all tenants are entitled to become members and have voting rights on the rules and rule changes.

Tenant or resident leaseholder of Dacorum Community Gateway could become a member of Dacorum Community Gateway. Dacorum Community Gateway would be based in Dacorum and has been created through a partnership between Dacorum Borough Council and its tenants and leaseholders.

If the majority of tenants who vote in the ballot are in favour of the transfer and if the transfer goes ahead, Dacorum Community Gateway would take over ownership and management of the Councils 10,600 homes, the freehold of 1,600 leasehold properties and approximately 8,000 garages and would be the largest organisation of its kind in England.

### **Why is the Council asking you to consider this change?**

The Council would like to continue to provide and improve on existing services and, if more money was available, provide new services that you have told us you want. However due to financial constraints that exist now, and which are not projected to improve, the Council will find it increasingly difficult to sustain the service to the current high standard and deliver the improvements it thinks you deserve. In 2000, the Government brought in new rules which mean that Councils have to bring their homes up to a minimum standard called the Decent Homes Standard. Councils are required to meet this minimum standard by 2010.

### **What options other than a transfer were looked at?**

Since March 2008 the Council has worked closely with tenant and leaseholder representatives through the Tenant Steering Group, the Housing Advisory Panel, staff representatives, Councillors, an Independent Tenants' Advisor and Government Office East to look at the options available to the Council to ensure it could reach and maintain homes to the Governments Decent Homes Standard target.

The options considered were:

- ❑ Stay with the Council, with no increased investment in homes or services.
- ❑ Transfer ownership of all of the Council's homes to a not-for-profit housing organisation. The new organisation would be free from the financial constraints that restrict the Council from investing the amounts of money needed to improve homes, estates and your local area.
- ❑ Create an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), which would manage housing on the Council's behalf but would continue to be subject to Government rules and would not produce any additional funding.
- ❑ Develop a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) with a private sector partner which would manage and maintain homes through a contract with the Council. The Government would provide some additional subsidy to help fund the payments.

### **What are the key benefits of transfer?**

If the transfer goes ahead, there would be a budget of £184 million for investment in the homes over the first six years to bring them up to the Dacorum Community Gateway Standard, higher than the Government's minimum standard.

Over 30 years Dacorum Community Gateway would plan to invest around £685million in housing, estates and neighbourhoods.

This would mean, where needed:

- ❑ Providing an improved repairs service and investing in environmental and additional security measures.
- ❑ Replacement uPVC double glazed windows.
- ❑ Modern, efficient central heating.

- ❑ A tenant and resident leaseholder led environmental improvements budget.

### **What would Dacorum Community Gateway's approach be to involving tenants and resident leaseholders?**

As a Community Gateway, Dacorum Community Gateway would be owned by tenants and resident leaseholders and put them at the heart of the organisation. This will be a fundamental part of how the organisation would operate. Dacorum Community Gateway would encourage tenant and resident leaseholders to get involved by:

- ❑ Encouraging more tenants and resident leaseholders to develop and get involved in local resident led projects.
- ❑ Ensuring tenants are at the heart of decision making and scrutiny of Dacorum Community Gateways performance.
- ❑ Ensuring individual tenants and resident leaseholders have opportunities to influence the decisions made about their homes and neighbourhoods.
- ❑ Listening and act on feedback from tenants and resident leaseholders on services and proposals.
- ❑ Including a long term sustainable budget in the Business Plan for tenant involvement and local projects.

### **Compare the difference for yourself**

If the transfer goes ahead, you can see in the table below called the "Five Minute Guide to Transfer" on page XX what Dacorum Community Gateway would plan to do in the first six years after the transfer. You can compare this to what the Council thinks it will be able to achieve given the financial constraints.

<b><u>Improvement Programme for first 6 years</u></b>	
<b>The Council (based on the Council's current projections).</b>	<b>Included within Dacorum Community Gateways business plan.</b>
<b>£22.4 million</b> for improvements to tenanted property including new kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors and roofs.	<b>£60 million</b> for improvements to tenanted property including new kitchens and bathrooms with more choice, windows, doors and roofs.
No funding for external security lighting	<b>£2 million</b> for external security lighting.
<b>No money</b> for complete property	<b>£13.4 million</b> for complete property

<p>refurbishments</p> <p><b>No</b> planned programme of refurbishment of homes of non-traditional construction</p>	<p>refurbishments and remodelling, environmental improvements including homes of non-traditional construction fences, parking bays and hard-standings where possible.</p>
<p><b>No</b> funding for environmental improvements.</p>	<p><b>£11.5 million</b> for environmental improvements including fences, parking bays and hard-standings where possible.</p>
<p><b>No</b> planned programme for the refurbishment of garage sites</p> <p><b>Reduced</b> budget for landscaping and grounds maintenance of communal areas</p>	<p><b>£5.5 million</b> for the refurbishment of garage sites.</p> <p><b>£700,000</b> for landscaping and grounds maintenance in communal areas and sheltered housing schemes.</p>
<p><b>No</b> handyperson service</p> <p><b>No</b> budget for a 'Community Fund'</p>	<p><b>Introduce</b> a handy person service to assist older tenants and tenants who are disabled with carrying out minor jobs for, which would otherwise be the tenant's responsibilities.</p> <p>A new 'Dacorum Community Gateway Fund' for tenants groups to bid for money for local projects and initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Housing management</b></p>	
<p>The Council would do its best to continue to deliver services within the reducing budgets it expects to have available. However, the Council would need to consider substantial cuts to the number of housing staff.</p>	<p>There would be designated anti-social behaviour staff providing a more localised, accessible and responsive service dealing with issues you told us were important to you.</p>
<p>The Council expects that the Housing Service budget would need to be cut each year from 2010. This would likely mean job losses arising from services, for example cutting repairs and maintenance back to the basic minimum level. Under current Government rules the Council would be unable to develop the housing</p>	<p>Extra resources would allow Dacorum Community Gateway to improve front line housing services. These would include; Improvements to how anti-social behaviour is managed; Improved estate management including regular routine estate inspections.</p>



services in the way it know you want.	
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## Value for Money

Because Dacorum Community Gateway would have a fully funded Business Plan over 30 years it would be able to guarantee investment in your home and would have more resources to develop services than the Council could afford.

In addition, and in consultation with tenants and leaseholders, Dacorum Community Gateway would be committed to:

- ❑ Providing improved repairs service and investing in environmental and estate security improvements.
- ❑ Providing more off-road parking facilities where feasible and protecting car parking around sheltered housing schemes.
- ❑ Introducing a handy person service within one year of the transfer to assist older tenants and tenants who are disabled with carrying out minor jobs for, which would otherwise be the tenant's responsibilities.
- ❑ Being able to support the Council in progressing regeneration and redevelopment opportunities to ensure that the needs of future communities can be met.
- ❑ Consulting all tenants and leaseholders individually on improvement works to their homes.
- ❑ Funding for environmental improvements such as fences, parking, paths and other works.
- ❑ Improving how anti-social behaviour is managed including graffiti and nuisance.
- ❑ Involving tenants and resident leaseholders on further service improvements.

## Why can't the Council spend what is needed?

There are a variety of reasons why the Council cannot do all the repairs and improvements that it or you would like. The table below sets out the main reasons why, due to current Government rules on local authority finance, Dacorum Community Gateway could afford to carry out the promises in this document when the Council could not.

The Council cannot afford to borrow all of the money needed to pay for modernisation and improvements as it would be unable to repay the loans.	Dacorum Community Gateway would work within different financial rules than the Council. It would have the ability to borrow money to pay for the works and to pay back money over a long period – usually 30 years.
At the moment the Council has to send back to the Government an amount of tenants' rent money to support council	Every penny of every pound of rent received by Dacorum Community Gateway would be spent on the housing service and

housing nationally. By 2011 this is expected to amount to around £20 million every year.	repaying its loans. Unlike the Council it would not have to subsidise the cost of social housing nationally.
The Council has to pay over 75% of its Right to Buy sales to the Government for redistribution across the country	There would be no requirement in the future to return Right to Buy money to Government.

### **Where does tenants' current rent money go?**

The Council runs a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which is used to collect rent and which pays for the day-to-day housing services. Increasingly the Council is finding that the cost of delivering the housing service is not covered by the allowances made by the Government.

Every year, Dacorum Council has to pay over a large sum to the Government from the rent it receives from tenants. This money, along with money from other councils, is paid into a Government fund and most of it is redistributed between other councils to help them to bring their homes up to the basic Decent Homes Standard and run their housing services.

### **How is the price that Dacorum Community Gateway would pay for the homes worked out?**

Government rules on a proposal from any local authority to transfer its stock require the new organisation to buy the stock from the Council. The price that Dacorum Community Gateway pays for the Council's homes is based on a Government formula that takes account of:

- ❑ The likely rents payable by tenants over a 30-year period.
- ❑ The cost of the programme of repairs and improvements that are planned by Dacorum Community Gateway.
- ❑ The fact that tenants would keep their key tenancy rights and that the housing must be kept available for rent at affordable levels set by the Government.
- ❑ The costs of managing the homes over that period.
- ❑ The cost of carrying out the promises to tenants and leaseholders set out in this document and the tenants offer document.

This way of pricing the homes takes into account the fact that Dacorum Community Gateway would need to have sufficient resources in its business plan to pay for the expected costs of managing and repairing homes and delivering on all the promises to tenants and leaseholders. This is very different to the way the value of homes is calculated under the Right to Buy.

### **What about new homes?**

Many tenants and leaseholders are anxious to know that affordable homes to rent would be available for future generations and the Council has actively worked with a number of organisations to achieve this. If the transfer goes ahead the Council would plan to use at least 40% of the useable sale proceeds to support the building and investment in new

affordable housing in Dacorum. The remainder of the receipt will help to deliver the Dacorum Sustainable Community Strategy.

### **Where would Dacorum Community Gateway get the money from to pay for the improvements to the Housing Service?**

Dacorum Community Gateway would use rent from tenants to pay for the improvements to tenants homes. In addition to this the new organisation would be able to borrow money from lenders if it is required. This money could be used to develop new modern affordable housing in Dacorum.

The loans, like mortgages, would be repaid over around 30 years and the cost of repaying them would be met from tenants rents.

### **What would be the Council's housing role after the transfer?**

If the transfer goes ahead, the Council would no longer be the freeholder of your home but would continue to work in close partnership with Dacorum Community Gateway.

Dacorum Community Gateway would have regular meetings with the Council where any problems or difficulties could be discussed and resolved and plans made for improvements in the future.

If the transfer goes ahead this document would form part of a formal contract that Dacorum Community Gateway would have with the Council for delivering better services.

Dacorum Borough Council would: (amend as master)

- ☐ Make sure Dacorum Community Gateway carries out the promises made in this document. These promises would be the subject of a legally binding contract between the Council and Dacorum Community Gateway
- ☐ Have the right to nominate three people to membership of the Board at the point of the transfer.
- ☐ Keep its legal duty towards homeless people and provide housing advice.
- ☐ Work to provide more affordable housing in Dacorum with partners including Dacorum Community Gateway
- ☐ Assess and develop different ways of meeting housing need
- ☐ Continue to process Housing Benefit applications
- ☐ Continue to provide other non-housing services, such as rubbish collection, environmental health, planning and recreation services.

### **What role would Councillors have?**

If the transfer goes ahead, you would still be able to ask Councillors to act on your behalf if you have problems with your home, just as you would now.

### **What is the timetable for consultation?**

The current plans are:

XXXXXXXXXX 20XX: This is the period of formal consultation with tenants on their 'offer document' (called Stage 1). Leaseholders will be able to contact the Council on the Freephone number to ask questions about this Leaseholder Offer Document.

XXXXXXXX 20XX: The Council will take account of tenants' and leaseholder comments on the transfer proposal. The Council will then decide whether details of this proposal needs to be clarified and whether to go ahead with the ballot of all the Council's secure and introductory tenants and leaseholders. If the Council decides not to go ahead with the vote then the process stops and the transfer proposal goes no further.

XXXXXXXXXX 20XX: If the Council decides to go ahead you will be sent a letter that will outline any points of clarity and whether the Council has decided to proceed to a ballot for tenants and introductory tenants and a separate ballot for leaseholders

XXXXXXXXXXXX 20XX: A confidential ballot would be organised by an independent organisation, Electoral Reform Services. Every individual secure and introductory tenant would have a vote and every leaseholder will have a separate vote. Neither the Council nor Dacorum Community Gateway would know which way you have voted.

After the ballot period and if successful, the Council will write to all tenants and leaseholders giving the result of the ballot and to explain that you have a further 28 day period for representations to be made to the Secretary of State.

### **How have your views shaped this proposal?**

The Council has used newsletters, drop-in sessions, road shows, surveys and focus groups to ensure that tenants and leaseholders are aware of the proposals. It has worked closely with the Independent Tenant Advisor from the Tenant Participation and Advisory Service (TPAS), Tenant Steering Group (which has leaseholder representation), Staff Steering Group and tenants from a cross section of the community, including the Housing Advisory Panel, Maintenance Focus Group and the Leaseholder Focus Group. The Council has listened to suggestions about how to improve services and also recognised concerns and possible objections so that they can be addressed within this proposal.

### **How would the vote work.**

The Council would only be able to carry on with the transfer if the majority of secure and introductory tenants who vote, vote 'yes' to this proposal.

If there is a 'yes' vote, the Council would then ask the Secretary of State to give consent before the transfer can take place. If this consent is given then the Council would go ahead and transfer its housing to Dacorum Community Gateway. The transfer would be likely to happen in January 2011.

### **Fact**

Although it is the tenants that have to decide whether the Council can carry on with the

proposed transfer the Council has decided to undertake a ballot of leaseholders to get your views.

Your response to this consultation will be considered by the Council.

### **What about leaseholders?**

Leaseholders are being invited to give the Council their views on the proposed transfer too. The purpose of this document is to set out the impact of the proposed transfer on leaseholders.

The Tenant Steering Group has leaseholder representatives and the Council has met with the Leaseholders Forum during the process.

Leaseholders have also had access to the Independent Tenant Advisor throughout the development of the transfer proposal and this offer document.

### **Your right to comment.**

The Council is committed to an open and detailed consultation with its tenants and leaseholders and you have a role to play in the consultation.

The Council will consider any comments tenants and leaseholders make on the proposal. There is a reply form attached to this consultation document for your comments. Please send your comments in to reach the Council by midday on XXth February 2009.

## **SECTION TWO**

### **About Dacorum Community Gateway**

#### **At a glance**

Dacorum Community Gateway would be:

- ❑ A not-for-profit, tenant and leaseholder owned industrial and provident society and would be a charitable housing organisation.
- ❑ Specifically created by the Council in partnership with tenants to take over ownership and management of Dacorum Borough Council's housing management and leaseholder services.
- ❑ Set up with 15 volunteer Board Members, seven of which would be tenants and leaseholders after the transfer.
- ❑ Registered and regulated by the Tenant Services Authority (which took over the regulatory role from the Housing Corporation on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008) and;
- ❑ Have a legally binding agreement with the Council to ensure that all the promises made to you in this document are met.

### **What type of organisation is Dacorum Community Gateway?**

Dacorum Community Gateway Limited would be an Industrial and Provident Society created through a partnership between the Council and tenants specifically to own and manage the Council's homes. It would be based in Dacorum and would be a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) with the Tenant Services Authority, which would regulate and inspect its performance and governance arrangements.

### **Dacorum Community Gateway would be:**

- ❑ Based in Dacorum
- ❑ Would be a Community Gateway, giving tenants and resident leaseholders a powerful say over the management of their home and neighbourhood.
- ❑ A tenant and resident leaseholder owned organisation run by a Board of seven tenants (including one resident leaseholder), three people nominated from the Council and five independent people.
- ❑ A not for profit organisation, which would mean that any surpluses made would be spent on delivering or improving homes and services or repaying loans.
- ❑ Dacorum Community Gateway would be different from a traditional Registered Social Landlord because:
  - It would be owned solely by its tenants and resident leaseholders
  - All tenants and resident leaseholders would be able to become members of Dacorum Community Gateway.
  - Dacorum Community would have a consultation and involvement scheme specifically for its young residents.
  - Tenant and resident leaseholder Board Members would be elected by all tenant and resident leaseholders until such time as 25% have become members at which point elections will be by the shareholding membership.
  - It would be committed to developing and supporting a tenant and resident leaseholder led Community Gateway Committee to scrutinise and assist the Board in developing the organisation and be a base for developing future tenant and resident leaseholder involvement on the Board.
  - Local community areas would form the basis of activity and decision making in local neighbourhoods.
  - You would be able to get involved in as much or as little as you want and a range of options for involvement would be actively promoted.
  - Communities would be encouraged to work with other partners, such as the police and the Council, on local issues.
  - It would work at a local level to develop tenant led community projects and

would have a dedicated annual budget to pay for these projects.

### **How does Dacorum Community Gateway differ from a traditional housing association?**

Dacorum Community Gateway would be fundamentally different from a traditional housing association in that all of its tenants and resident leaseholders would have the opportunity to become members. This effectively means that tenants and resident leaseholders would own the organisation and therefore have a say over how the organisation would be run.

In addition to this Dacorum Community Gateway would be more than just a good landlord. Along with other organisations such as the Council, the police and healthcare providers it would play a significant role in addressing estate based issues such as anti social and nuisance behaviour, building cohesive and involved communities and providing and delivering tenant led community projects.

Dacorum Community Gateway would be a Social Landlord, registered with the Tenant Services Authority. The prime objective of Registered Social Landlords is the provision of affordable rented housing to people in housing need.

It would be an Industrial and Provident Society and a not-for-profit organisation, which means that all of its income would have to be put back into its housing, repaying loans and providing services to you. As a not for profit organisation it would not pay out any dividends.

Dacorum Community Gateway would also be registered with charitable rules. One advantage of charitable status is that charities pay less tax, which allows them to make best use of their income for the benefit of their tenants.

As a charitable organisation Dacorum Community Gateway would be limited in who it could house and the activities that it would be allowed to carry out. As a starting point it would adopt the Council's current allocations policy, and consult with tenants when developing that policy over time.

It would not be able to:

- ☐ Carry out extensive commercial activities.
- ☐ Provide services to other outside organisations, which are not charities or are not statutory agencies.
- ☐ Provide commercial rented accommodation.

Dacorum Community Gateway has been set up with the help of the Council specifically to take over the ownership and management of the Council's homes, if tenants vote in favour of the transfer.

Dacorum Community Gateway would ensure the general membership has powers to make decisions that are fundamental to the constitution and structure of organisation. However, the membership would not take part in the day-to-day running of Dacorum Community Gateway.

### **What does the Board of Dacorum Community Gateway do?**

If transfer takes place the Board of Dacorum Community Gateway would have overall



responsibility for running the organisation including setting policies and directing activities.

### **How were the Board Members chosen?**

The four tenants and one resident leaseholder were appointed by the Tenant Steering Group following a process, which involved inviting all tenants and resident leaseholders to consider applying and taking part in an interview. In addition to this, two tenants were also appointed as Board Members 'in waiting' to take up the additional two places on the Board should tenants vote for transfer.

The five Council Board Members were selected by elected Councillors on a basis that reflects the current political composition of the Council and their interest in the future of housing. Two would stand down should the transfer take place.

The five independent people were interviewed and appointed by tenant and leaseholder and Council Board Members following advertisements in the local press and professional journals. The independent members are not connected with the Council and were chosen for their skills and experience. They have a wide range of valuable experience, expertise and skills to ensure the Board fulfils the Tenant Services Authority's strict guidance on how the organisation is run.

### **Who are the Board Members?**

#### **Tenant Board Members**

##### **Rose Kosmalski, Chair of Dacorum Community Gateway:**

Rose works as a bookkeeper administrator for a local Park Homes company. She has been a Dacorum Tenant for 14 years and has served on the Council's Housing Advisory Panel. She set up and is still chair of Shepherds Green Residents' Association. A working mother with a young son, Rose is also a volunteer bereavement counsellor.

##### **Denise Delderfield:**

Denise lives and works in Berkhamsted. A tenant since 1978, she has been active in tenant involvement in Dacorum for over 10 years and is a member of the Council's Housing Advisory Panel. She chairs Berkhamsted Beavers, a swimming club for people with disabilities. A widow with two adult children, Denise was, until her recruitment to the Shadow Board, Chair of the Tenants' Steering Group.

##### **Angela Attard:**

Angela works as a state registered Occupational Therapist for the NHS. She is also a staff representative involved in the re-structuring of the health services provision. Angela has been a Council tenant for 19 years and is a working mother.

##### **Richard Sears, Deputy Vice Chair:**

Richard works as the Facilities Manager at the National Film Archive in Berkhamsted and

has been a Dacorum Tenant for 15 years. Married with two young children, Richard has been a member of the Tenants' Steering Group and has also participated in the Council's Maintenance Focus Group.

**Karen Pullin:**

Karen Pullin works as a Psychotherapist and has been a Dacorum Tenant for 2 years. She is a working mother who has been an active member of the Tenants Steering Group since last year.

**Elaine Turner:**

Elaine works for the Department of Health as a Project Manager leading the national campaign to combat childhood obesity. Elaine has been a Council tenant for 3 years and, prior to that, was a housing association tenant.

**Independent Board Members**

**Kari Greaves:**

Kari is currently Assistant Director of Customer Services at Guinness Midsummer, where she heads the landlord function for more than 3,000 homes. She is responsible for achieving key performance targets that meet the organisation's corporate objectives.

**Kate Russell:**

Kate has worked for a housing organisation for 15 years and before that worked in housing management for several local authorities.

She is currently Director of Policy and Performance at Metropolitan Housing Partnership where she is responsible for policy and strategy development for housing services, resident involvement, equality and diversity and sustainability.

**Liam Good:**

Liam works as Director of Technical Services for an Arms Length Management Organisation that manages Council homes on behalf of Kensington and Chelsea. His role covers asset management, investment, maintenance, regeneration and estate improvements and management of the Customer Services Centre.

**Selina Olah:**

Selina is currently Divisional Finance Director for Orbit Group Ltd, which provides 33,000 homes in the Midlands, East and South East. Prior to joining Orbit, Selina held a number of senior finance positions within the private sector, including Financial Services and Commercial Property Management.

**Council Board Member Nominees**

**Jai Restall, Vice Chair:**

Born in Hemel Hempstead, Jai lived temporarily in Cornwall before moving back to the borough in 2003. He first became involved in local government in 2006, when he was elected as a Borough Councillor for Gadebridge. He is an active member of Gadebridge

Community Association and Gadebridge, Chaulden and Warners End Neighbourhood Action Group. Jai is a member of the following committees; Strategic Planning and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny; substitute for Social Overview and Scrutiny; and Development Control.

**Brian Ayling:**

Brian moved to Hemel Hempstead in 1983, having worked in the town since 1975, and became a Borough Councillor in 2003. He has served on a number of Overview and Scrutiny committees and was Dacorum's Mayor in 2007/2008. Brian is now Portfolio Holder responsible for Service & Performance Improvement.

**Suqlain Mahmood:**

Suqlain has lived and worked in Hemel Hempstead since 1990. He is a Chartered Structural Design Engineer working with a local company. He was responsible for the structural design of the Snow Centre in Bennetts End.

Suqlain was elected as Borough Councillor for Bennetts End Ward in 2007. He has helped with the development of the Hemel Hempstead Boxing Club based at the Bennetts End Youth Club and is a member of the Councils Social Overview Scrutiny Committee.

He brings building design, construction and management experience to the Board.

**Brenda Link:**

Brenda has lived in Hemel Hempstead for 40 years and has been a council tenant for the same amount of time. She is a widow with four children, eight grandchildren and one great grandchild.

She has been a Borough Councillor for three and half years and represents the Highfield Ward. She is on the Housing Advisory Panel and the Councils, Appeals; Licensing; and Health Committees. She has worked with the High Flyers youth action group in Highfield for five years.

**Janice Marshall:**

Janice, a Boxmoor Ward Councillor, has lived in Hemel Hempstead since 1974. Throughout her 16 years as a Councillor, she has been involved in the delivery of the Council's housing service, initially as a member of the Housing Committee, then Vice-Chair, then Chair of the Housing Committee and subsequently Housing Portfolio Holder until May 2007. Janice is presently chair of the Social Overview and Scrutiny committee which oversees housing and community activities within the Borough.

Janice is also a member of the management committee of the Hemel Hempstead Day Centre for the Elderly and chair of governors of a Hemel Hempstead primary school.

**Do Board Members get paid?**

No. Although the Tenant Services Authority allows a reasonable payment, none is currently proposed for Dacorum Community Gateway. Board Members have been recruited to serve on a voluntary basis. However, Board Members can claim reasonable out-of-pocket

expenses, such as travel expenses incurred in carrying out Dacorum Community Gateway's business, and on production of receipts.

### **If the transfer goes ahead, how would Board Members be chosen in the future?**

Subject to the outcome of the ballot of tenants, the transfer would take place in early ~~20~~ 2011. The Board Members at the point of transfer would serve until at least the first Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Dacorum Community Gateway after the transfer takes place. At that, and each subsequent AGM, the tenant, resident leaseholder and independent Board Members would retire on a rotational basis. This would provide continuity for the organisation and a process for gradual renewal of the Board. Dacorum Community Gateway would be committed to provide training to prospective Board Members and to prepare them to fill any vacancies on the Board. This training will include professional accredited training. Retiring Board Members would be eligible for re-selection at each AGM up to a maximum of nine years.

Council Board Members would be chosen by the Council and hold office for a period determined by the Council but no longer than three years without re-nomination and would also be eligible for re-selection up to a maximum of nine years.

Dacorum Community Gateway would elect its tenant and resident leasehold members at the Annual General Meeting of Dacorum Community Gateway Members.

Independent Board Members would be chosen for their skills and recommended for election at the AGM of Dacorum Community Gateway. All members of Dacorum Community Gateway, not just Board Members, would be eligible to vote in elections for Independent Board Members.

### **What would membership of Dacorum Community Gateway mean?**

All tenants and resident leaseholders would be able to become members of Dacorum Community Gateway.

Members of the Dacorum Community Gateway would be able to:

- ☐ Help shape specific strategies, policies and key decision which have an impact on you.
- ☐ Attend and vote at General Meetings.
- ☐ Elect a Community Gateway Committee of tenant and resident leaseholders.
- ☐ Elect tenants and resident leaseholder Board Members.

The Board of Dacorum Community Gateway would work in partnership with the Community Gateway Committee and actively seek and consider the views of the membership.

Dacorum Community Gateway would actively promote membership and encourage all tenants and resident leaseholders to become members and get involved in decisions which affect them.

### **What is the Community Gateway Committee?**

Dacorum Community Gateway would create a Community Gateway Committee of tenants and resident leaseholders to maximise tenant and resident leaseholder influence in the organisation.

It would be composed of 25 tenants and leaseholders including between two and four of the tenant and leaseholder Board Members. The role of the Community Gateway Committee would be to assist these Board Members in representing the interests of tenants and resident leaseholders at Board level.

### **How are the Community Gateway Committee representatives selected?**

The Community Gateway Committee would be a critical element of the governance structure because it would be a mechanism which ensured that the tenant and leaseholder Board Members stay closely in touch with the priorities and the interests of a broad range of representative tenants. To strengthen the role of the Community Gateway Committee it could also have a role in making decisions on local activities such as community based projects or estate and environmental works and influence how money is allocated.

The Board would seek to ensure that there is an appropriate geographical and community representation on the Community Gateway Committee. Where under-representation is identified, specific work would be undertaken to address any such under-representation.

### **What about the Leaseholder Forum?**

The new organisation would maintain, promote and develop the Leaseholder Forum in order to ensure that the interests and voice of leaseholders would continue to be heard.

### **What are the core values and objectives of Dacorum Community Gateway?**

Like the Council Dacorum Community Gateway would aim to offer the best possible standards and service to its tenants and leaseholders and would apply the following values to all that it does:

To be added.

### **Who would provide the service and what would happen to the existing staff?**

Like the Council, Dacorum Community Gateway would employ paid staff to run the housing service on a day-to-day basis. If the transfer goes ahead, current Dacorum Borough Council employees who deal with the management and maintenance of your homes, such as housing officers, together with related support service employees, would transfer to Dacorum Community Gateway.

Tenants and leaseholders would continue to deal with people they know. This would ensure continuity of service for tenants and leaseholders and means Dacorum Community Gateway would have a skilled and experienced workforce to rely on from day one of the transfer.

Dacorum Community Gateway recognises that the skills and experience of staff would be one of its greatest assets. Dacorum Community Gateway's ambition is to be an employer that people would strive to work for. Its aim would be to retain and attract quality staff by making the experience of work rewarding, challenging, stimulating and enjoyable.

There would be a comprehensive joint training programme for staff, tenants and resident leaseholders and a commitment to participate in local employment schemes.

The additional work which would be undertaken by Dacorum Community Gateway could create employment opportunities for people locally.

### **Who regulates and inspects Dacorum Community Gateway?**

The Tenant Services Authority, which took over the regulatory role from the Housing Corporation in December 2008, is the Government appointed body that regulates all Registered Social Landlords and would regulate Dacorum Community Gateway.

Dacorum Community Gateway must achieve registration with the Tenant Services Authority as a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) before a transfer can take place. Registration of the new organisation with the Tenant Services Authority would demonstrate that Dacorum Community Gateway would be run properly and is financially sound.

The Tenant Services Authority:

- ❑ Whilst the TSA has been developing its regulatory framework it adopted the Housing Corporation's regulatory code. The framework like the code sets the Tenant Services Authority's expectations which all Registered Social Landlords must follow. These expectations are to ensure that your rights are protected, services are of a high quality and financial and governance arrangements are sound.
- ❑ Monitors and reviews the performance of Registered Social Landlords to ensure these expectations are met. Were Dacorum Community Gateway not to meet the standards of the Tenant Services Authority there are extensive powers which enable them to step in to put things right.

The finances of Dacorum Community Gateway would also be monitored by independent external auditors who would be appointed by Dacorum Community Gateway if the transfer takes place. In addition to this the Audit Commission (through the Housing Inspectorate) would continue to have a role in checking the standard of service delivered by Dacorum Community Gateway.

### **How will the Council ensure Dacorum Community Gateway delivers the promises in this document?**

Before a transfer could take place Dacorum Community Gateway would enter into a formal and legally binding contract with the Council. This offer document and the promises in it represent a fundamental part of the contract Dacorum Community Gateway would have with the Council. This agreement would allow the Council to make sure that all of the promises made to you by the Council in this document were delivered. If there were any suggestion that Dacorum Community Gateway were failing to honour the promises, the Council could take action to enforce them.

Tenants and leaseholders would be protected by arrangements set up by the Council to monitor Dacorum Community Gateway's performance. As part of those arrangements, the Council would need to be consulted in respect of specific rule changes.

## **Fact**

- ❑ Dacorum Community Gateway would have a greater role for tenants and resident leaseholders than a traditional housing organisation and they would have a greater say over the rules.
- ❑ Tenants and resident leaseholders would have the opportunity to become members.
- ❑ Dacorum Community Gateway's performance would be regularly monitored by the Council and by the Tenant Services Authority to ensure the organisation was delivering on the Council's promises and was being properly managed.
- ❑ Staff currently employed in the Housing Service would transfer to Dacorum Community Gateway including Sheltered Housing Officers, Tenant Services Officers and Estate Improvement Officers.
- ❑ Tenants would be involved in the appointment of tenant and independent Board Members.
- ❑ Dacorum Community Gateway would have a committee of tenant and resident leaseholders which would help the Board to make decisions.

## **SECTION THREE**

### **Improving and repairing homes**

At a glance

Dacorum Community Gateway would:

- ❑ Have a budget of £184 million to invest in tenants homes over the first six years and in the region of £685 million over 30 years.
- ❑ To introduce an improved landscaping and grounds maintenance service in consultation with tenants and leaseholders within one year of the transfer.
- ❑ Have a budget of £750,000 every year for the first five years to clear the backlog of disabled adaptations with the Council at the time of the transfer.

#### **The Dacorum Community Gateway Standard**

Following extensive research with tenants and leaseholders in developing this transfer proposal the Council knows you want a better standard of home, estate and environment in which to live.

Dacorum Community Gateway has budgeted to improve and maintain tenants homes to a new standard called the Dacorum Community Gateway Standard.

This would include replacing major components such as central heating systems, windows, external doors, kitchens and bathrooms as they wear out, as well as upgrading or renewing roofs.

#### **Ensuring the effective delivery of the Repairs and Maintenance Service**

Dacorum Community Gateway is committed to continuing to encourage tenant and resident leaseholder involvement in monitoring of the Repairs and Maintenance Service by:

- ❑ Continuing to support and develop the Maintenance Focus Group but extend membership to Community Gateway Committee members, staff and Board members which monitor the delivery of the maintenance service and recommends or decides changes for implementation.
- ❑ Working with the Community Gateway Committee who would provide a continuous and independent scrutiny and overview of the service and activities of the new organisation.
- ❑ Developing ways for encouraging tenants and resident leaseholders to feed back any issues in order to assist in further improving the service.
- ❑ Promoting local training and employment opportunities both within Dacorum Community Gateway and with contractors, and through resident management organisations.



- ❑ Publishing details of work programmes giving time for tenants and resident leaseholders to make any necessary arrangements.
- ❑ Integrating energy saving works into planned improvements.
- ❑ Involving tenant and resident leaseholders in prioritising and programming estate improvements.
- ❑ Ensuring that all work is effectively supervised and monitored to ensure that it is of the required standard.

### **Making estates pleasant, attractive and safe places to live**

We know from tenants' and leaseholder feedback how important estate improvements are. At present the Council has very little money to spend on things like fences and better parking provision. Dacorum Community Gateway would be able to plan to spend £11.5 million on environmental improvements in the first six years including fences, parking bays and hard standings where possible.

To ensure that money is spent wisely, Dacorum Community Gateway would discuss its estate improvement plans with tenants and leaseholders' groups to identify priorities for each estate and the best way to deliver them.

### **Environmental Improvements and making homes affordable**

Dacorum Community Gateway would, through the careful procurement of goods and services, recognise its role and support the Council in its commitment to economic, environmental and social sustainability.

### **Who would do the improvement works?**

Dacorum Community Gateway would work with a range of contractors to deliver the improvement works.

### **Planned maintenance**

In addition to continuing with existing programmes, Dacorum Community Gateway would undertake the following additional maintenance works to help ensure homes and estates are well maintained through a commitment to:

- ❑ Maintaining appropriate 'open spaces' on estates that transfer and ensuring that trees and shrubs are trimmed regularly – as part of a review of existing grounds maintenance and landscaping arrangements which would take place within one year of the transfer.
- ❑ Improving the programme of external painting and aim to install uPVC guttering and fascias to reduce future maintenance costs.
- ❑ Increase the rate at which windows are replaced with uPVC double glazing.

### **Would leaseholders be consulted about work to their homes?**

Yes. The Dacorum Community Gateway. The Government would ensure that all the required

notices under the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 would be served on leaseholders. Under these, leaseholders have the right to be consulted prior to any improvements or repair works over the value of £250 where these would affect the service charge under their lease.

### **Would leaseholders have a new obligation to pay for repair and improvement works?**

As the terms of a leaseholder's lease would not be affected by the transfer, there would be no change to a leaseholder's obligation to pay for repair or improvement works to a property. Whether a leaseholder is obliged to pay for either repairs or improvements (or both) would be determined by the terms of their original lease with the Council.

### **What are Dacorum Community Gateway' plans for the Repairs Service?**

Dacorum Community Gateway would be committed to ensuring that the day-to-day repairs service and planned maintenance service continues to be both economical and effective after transfer, and would have a budget to continue to provide a 24 hour emergency service 365 days a year.

If transfer goes ahead Dacorum Community Gateway would also plan to complete a review of the responsive Repair Service within one year of transfer and agree with tenants and leaseholders a plan for bringing in any changes. The review would concentrate on:

- ❑ Opportunities for leaseholders to use the current contractors for repairs and maintenance.
- ❑ The timescales for completing repairs.
- ❑ The specification for repairs.
- ❑ The appointment system (including evening and weekend appointments).
- ❑ The arrangements for inspections and monitoring of repairs.
- ❑ Regular inspections to identify preventative maintenance issues.
- ❑ The arrangements for taking repair requests and for informing tenants and leaseholders of progress, including the use of technology such as text messaging.

### **Planned Maintenance**

In addition to continuing with existing programmes, Dacorum Community Gateway would undertake the following additional maintenance works to help ensure homes and estates are well maintained through a commitment to:

- Maintain the target frequency of decoration to internal communal areas in sheltered schemes and blocks of flats.
- Maintaining appropriate 'open spaces' on estates and ensuring that trees and shrubs are trimmed regularly – as part of a review of existing grounds maintenance arrangements to take place within one year of transfer.
- Continuing with the programme of external painting, but aiming to install uPVC doors, guttering and fascias to reduce future maintenance costs.

### **What would happen to service charges?**

After the transfer, Dacorum Community Gateway would be bound by the terms of the existing leases issued to leaseholders by the Council. This means that all existing leases would remain unchanged and continue to include details of the items included in service charges.

If transfer goes ahead, leaseholders would continue to be charged annually and for every 12 month period. Dacorum Community Gateway would plan provide leaseholders with a statement of actual expenditure for the previous year and a breakdown of estimated service charges for the following year.

An invoice or credit note to cover any under or over payment for the previous year would also be issued. This would ensure that the amount you are asked to pay is equal to the cost of providing the services. Dacorum Community Gateway would not make a profit from service charges.

Leaseholders would be consulted prior to the introduction of any new services that would affect them. Dacorum Community Gateway would not unreasonably refuse leaseholders the ability to opt out of new services if they wished and this was possible.

As the Council is able to recover the costs of VAT, it does not include the cost of VAT incurred in leaseholders' service charges. As the Dacorum Community Gateway would not normally be able to recover the costs of VAT, it would include these costs in leaseholder service charges but only if it is paying VAT, for example to an external contractor. Where Dacorum Community Gateway provides services in-house, the staffing costs would not incur a VAT charge.

It is normal practice in stock transfers for the council to enter into a 'VAT shelter'. A VAT shelter means that Dacorum Community Gateway will be able to recover VAT on the major works carried out in the first six years. Because of the VAT shelter, Dacorum Community Gateway will not pass on the VAT on any works that would be charged to leaseholders under the service charge where it is able to recover that VAT as part of the VAT shelter.

Service charge increases would continue to occur once a year (unless a new service is introduced).

### **Major works and the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002**

Dacorum Community Gateway would ensure that all the required notices under the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 would be served on leaseholders. Under these, leaseholders have the right to be consulted prior to any improvements or repair works, where these would affect the service charge of any leaseholder by £250 or more. Consultation would be in accordance with statutory requirements. Dacorum Community Gateway would also consult leaseholders on any long term arrangements (longer than 12 months) that it proposes to enter into, just as the Council does now, where individual contributions from leaseholders are likely to be more than £100 per year, for example, the communal decoration programme.

The purpose of this consultation is to help leaseholders plan for future costs. Under the consultation process leaseholders would be given:

- Details of the work proposed and the likely cost.
- The opportunity to nominate contractors who may be included in the tender process (depending on the nature of the works or services being tendered).
- The name and contact details of the officer supervising the contract.

The Dacorum Community Gateway would also plan offer a number of repayment options so you may be able to spread the cost more easily.

### **Assistance with paying major works costs**

The Dacorum Community Gateway recognises that some leaseholders will have bought their property some time ago, when the extent of the works needed was less obvious. It intends to help in those cases by limiting the cost as far as it can. The amount of help is limited because the Dacorum Community Gateway is a charity.

For those leaseholders that have bought their property and have an unexpired Section 125 notice, then the cap will be whatever is stipulated on the Section 125 notice. This cap is binding on both the Council and the Dacorum Community Gateway by statute.

The Section 125 notice is the notice that you will have been given when you bought the property. The notice sets out what works you would have to pay for and how much they might cost. In all cases the cap would be increased by building cost inflation from the year in which the notice was given. This provision for increase is in your section 125 notice.

The Dacorum Community Gateway cannot reduce the cap because, when the property was sold, the price under the Right to Buy reflected the works that may need to be carried out. If this statutory figure were reduced again then it would amount to the Council or the Dacorum Community Gateway providing the money twice.

The Dacorum Community Gateway would offer various repayment methods for leaseholders that could help them meet the costs of major capital works. These methods could include:

1. An interest-free loan for a 12-month period.
2. For works over £1000, resident leaseholders could apply to have any major works repayment spread over a 2 year period.
3. Taking out a charge (or mortgage) against the property with interest payable over the term, where the leaseholder(s) is over the age of 60 years with the costs met once the property is sold.
4. Investigating whether it is suitable to offer individuals the option of becoming a fixed equity owner and giving leaseholders access to financial advice.
5. The HCA (as a last resort) can make a loan to a leaseholder.

If applicable the Dacorum Community Gateway would make these options available as follows: The Dacorum Community Gateway would adopt whatever choice of principal home you have made with HM Revenue and Customs.

Leaseholders who bought the property from others, but who continue to use the property as their principal home.	Options 2-3 above where criteria met
Leaseholders who do not live in the property as their principal home.	Payment for works payable when due

### **What would happen to garages?**

The Council expects to transfer the majority of garages to Dacorum Community Gateway. If you pay for a garage that transfers to the new organisation you would continue to do so, but your payments would be made to Dacorum Community Gateway, rather than the Council.

### **What methods could you use to pay your service charges?**

The Dacorum Community Gateway would continue to offer all current methods available for paying your service charges after transfer.

The Dacorum Community Gateway would keep these methods under review and would also look positively at other ways in which leaseholders could pay their service charges.

### **Fact**

All existing leases would remain unchanged.

After transfer, the Dacorum Community Gateway would be bound by the terms of the existing leases issued to leaseholders by the Council. This means that all existing leases would remain unchanged and continue to include:

- Details of the items included in the service charges.
- Procedure for assigning the lease.
- Details of the responsibilities of both the leaseholder and the Dacorum Community Gateway.

The Dacorum Community Gateway would ensure that all the required notices under the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 would be served on leaseholders. Under these, leaseholders have the right to be consulted prior to any improvements or repair works which would affect the service charge of any leaseholder by more than £250.

**Further details on this consultation can be found at Section Five.**

In accordance with its policies, the Dacorum Community Gateway would also ensure that it consults leaseholders about proposed housing management changes that would substantially affect them.

### **Right of collective enfranchisement**

Leaseholders will continue to have the right to collectively purchase the freehold so long as the appropriate conditions are met.

### **Improving the housing service**

Dacorum Community Gateway would be committed to maintaining and improving the existing housing management services. Most importantly, the Dacorum Community Gateway would continue to provide locally based services within Dacorum, including:

- Acting at all times as a reasonable landlord.
- Providing cost effective services.
- Respecting the rights of leaseholders.
- Keeping the structure of the buildings in a good state of repair.
- Updating a guide summarising rights, responsibilities and services to leaseholders (the 'Leaseholders' Handbook').
- Encouraging the Leaseholders' Group to monitor the standard of service leaseholders receive.
- Where possible, looking to extend the use of its repair ordering facilities and emergency call-out service to leaseholders, although these would be at a charge.

Dacorum Community Gateway would ensure that leaseholders have access to advice and assistance on:

- Service charges (see Section XX)
- Tackling anti-social behaviour (see Section Seven)
- Day-to-day repairs and improvements (see Section Three)

### **Value for money**

The Dacorum Community Gateway would ensure that value for money is obtained when insuring the property so that leaseholders could benefit from cost savings.

The Leaseholders Forum would be able to monitor services and their related charges in order to check that leaseholders get value for money.

### **Leaseholders' Handbook**

The Leaseholders' Handbook would be updated within six months of transfer and would provide a range of information specifically for leaseholders. Useful information on

maintenance, insurance, opportunities for participation and consultation and local contact details would be included and kept up to date.

### **Customer Comments, Suggestions and Complaints**

Dacorum Community Gateway would recognise that complaints and feedback from tenants and leaseholders forms a crucial part of the continuous improvement process.

A published complaints policy and procedure would explain to tenants and leaseholders how complaints can be made, how they would be processed and how quickly they would be informed of the outcome.

The Dacorum Community Gateway would become a member of the Independent Housing Ombudsman Scheme. If a tenant or leaseholder wanted to take their complaint further after going through the procedure, they could then refer the matter to the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

The Dacorum Community Gateway would expect to comply with recommendations made by the Independent Housing Ombudsman after investigating a complaint.

Tenants and leaseholders would also be able to contact one of their local Councillors or their MP, in the same way as they can now.

Leaseholders have the right to refer any dispute with the freeholder to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal, for example any dispute over service charges can be referred to the LVT for determination. This right will continue if the housing stock is transferred. The Leasehold Valuation Tribunal is the independent body appointed by the government to make decisions on various types of leasehold dispute.

## **SECTION FOUR**

## **Delivering Better Local Services**

### **Providing the housing service**

Dacorum Community Gateway would be committed to maintaining and improving the existing housing management services.

Most importantly, Dacorum Community Gateway would continue to provide locally based services within Dacorum, ensuring that you have access to advice and assistance on:

- ☐ Anti-social behaviour and Estate Management (see Sections XX and Seven).
- ☐ Day-to-day repairs and improvements to your home (see Section Three).

### **A better service**

Dacorum Community Gateway would constantly try to improve its services. It would put tenants' and resident leaseholder's views on the quality of the service at the centre of its plans to improve and develop services.

#### **Dacorum Community Gateway's plans include:**

- ❑ Providing training in customer care to all staff at the point of the transfer and deliver a rolling programme of customer care training thereafter.
- ❑ Actively dealing with anti-social and nuisance behaviour with partner agencies, including enforcement of tenancy agreement conditions.
- ❑ Ensuring there are staff in the housing team to provide expert advice and support on anti-social behaviour in conjunction with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, within six months of the transfer.
- ❑ Providing you with information about the housing service on a regular basis e.g. by providing a quarterly newsletter.
- ❑ Producing a new, comprehensive Leaseholders' Handbook in different, easy to read formats, within six months of the transfer.
- ❑ Improving the standard of cleaning, caretaking and estate improvements by undertaking regular estate inspections with tenants, resident leaseholders and key statutory partners, consider the reinstatement of previously withdrawn caretakers and develop new monitoring standards within one year of the transfer
- ❑ A review of the grounds maintenance service within one year of the transfer. This could cover consideration of an enhanced grounds maintenance service including grass cutting for communal areas, picking up grass clippings, trimming of shrubs in communal landscaping and autumn leaf collection. Attention would be given to the needs of specific groups of tenants, for example to older tenants in certain accommodation.

### **Access to the housing service**

A priority for Dacorum Community Gateway would be to ensure that all tenants and resident leaseholders have good and reliable access to information at a time and location that is convenient to you. Support and advice would be provided in a variety of ways including home visits and better use of new technology such as the internet, texting and e-mail services.

### **Customer comments, suggestions and complaints**

Dacorum Community Gateway would recognise that complaints and feedback from tenants and resident leaseholders form a crucial part of the continuous improvement process.

A published complaints policy and procedure would explain how complaints can be made, how they would be processed and how quickly you would be informed of the outcome.

### **Fact**



Services would be improved and new services would be introduced.

Dacorum Community Gateway would become a member of the Independent Housing Ombudsman Scheme. If you wanted to take your complaint further after going through the procedure, you could refer any matter to the Independent Housing Ombudsman. Dacorum Community Gateway would expect to comply with recommendations made by the Independent Housing Ombudsman after investigating a complaint.

Tenants and leaseholders would also be able to contact one of their local Councillors or their Member of Parliament, in the same way as you can now.

### **Finding out what tenants and resident leaseholders want**

Being resident focussed, Dacorum Community Gateway would welcome any feedback it receives from tenants and leaseholders and would use it to help identify its strengths and weaknesses. It would also help to make improvements to the service.

Dacorum Community Gateway would carry out surveys to find out how well tenants and resident leaseholders think it is doing in various areas of the service. These surveys may include: telephone interviews or postal questionnaires, mystery shopping or slips returned on individual repairs. At least one service specific survey would be carried out each year. In addition Dacorum Community Gateway would continue to complete the statutory survey of all tenants.

Dacorum Community Gateway would work with tenants, through the Community Empowerment Team and through the Community Gateway Committee, to continuously develop its knowledge and understanding of what tenants and resident leaseholders want.

Dacorum Community Gateway would ensure that the Community Gateway Committee instigated and led area-based consultation exercises.

### **What would happen if tenants voted “no” and homes stayed with the Council?**

The Council would not be able to maintain area-based housing offices.

The ability of the council to maintain communal areas to a high standard would be reduced which would be likely to have an effect on the value of leasehold properties.

Services would need to be reviewed and cuts to services would be inevitable including reductions in the support provided to tenants experiencing financial difficulties; the quality of landscaping services and estate management.

### **Equality and diversity**

Dacorum Community Gateway is committed to ensuring that all staff, tenants and resident leaseholders are treated in a way that takes account of individual needs. Following discussions with various groups of tenants, resident leaseholders and staff Dacorum Community Gateway would be committed to:

- ❑ Implementing and regularly reviewing the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- ❑ Ensuring that all staff, tenant and resident leaseholder representatives receive specific equality and diversity training in delivering housing services to tenants and

resident leaseholders.

- ❑ Nominating individual members of staff and the Board to 'champion' the needs of tenants who are disabled, Black Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, and the needs of younger and older tenants.
- ❑ Making the needs of tenants who are disabled and those from BME backgrounds a specific responsibility of a customer focus committee.
- ❑ Establishing a tenants' continuous improvement group, this would concentrate on service delivery to tenants who are disabled and those from BME backgrounds.
- ❑ Developing a workforce that is representative of the communities it serves.

### **Equal access for all**

Dacorum Community Gateway would be a customer-focussed organisation, tailoring services to promote equality and diversity. The aim is to ensure all tenant and resident leaseholders can readily access the service irrespective of age, gender, race, disability, sexuality or faith. To make sure that this is achieved Dacorum Community Gateway would aim to:

- ❑ Ensure that appropriate methods of communication are used, based on tenants' individual needs, for example ensuring that information can be made available in large print, Braille, on audio tape or computer disk, online and in the major languages used by the population of Dacorum.
- ❑ Provide services for tenant and resident leaseholders who are hearing impaired including a British Sign Language interpreter if necessary.
- ❑ Ensure tenant and resident leaseholders with English as a second language can access the services they need through an interpreter or translation service as required.
- ❑ Work closely with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities to take into account their housing needs when developing services in the future.
- ❑ Ensure its offices are accessible by those with a physical disability.
- ❑ Work in partnership with the Council and other agencies to help ensure that homeless, vulnerable and other excluded groups are able to access the accommodation and services they need.
- ❑ Create homes, which take account of the particular needs of tenants and resident leaseholders who are disabled or who have cultural needs.
- ❑ Ensure that people who are disabled and those from BME backgrounds are encouraged to apply for employment with Dacorum Community Gateway and receive appropriate support, training and advice if appointed.

### **What would happen if tenants voted "no" and homes stayed with the Council?**

With reducing funding available in the future the Council would have to stop any non statutory services and reduce statutory services to a basic legal minimum.

All funding would be redirected to try and sustain the Decent Homes Standard although it is clear that this would be a major challenge.

The grounds maintenance service would be reviewed and the Council is likely to need to significantly reduce all work currently supported through rents. This would mean that a lot of estate management and improvement work would have to stop.

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## **SECTION FIVE**

### **Strengthening Communities**

#### **Dacorum Community Gateway would:**

- ❑ Work with residents, the Council and other agencies to make neighbourhoods attractive places where people want to live, work and be proud of.
- ❑ Establish a Dacorum Community Gateway Community Empowerment Unit at the transfer.

#### **Fostering community development**

The Council's housing service has funded and supported Tenant Participation to encourage the involvement of tenants in the decisions that have been made around how homes are managed, services and neighbourhood development.

Dacorum Community Gateway would fund additional staff to deliver its community and resident empowerment objectives.

Dacorum Community Gateway would have responsibility for some aspects of community development and regeneration. It would work closely with the Council and other key agencies to do its utmost to deliver what tenants have said they want in an effective way whilst recognising any financial constraints. Dacorum Community Gateway would have a dedicated budget and staff and would work with residents to build and create neighbourhoods in which people would be proud to live. Dacorum Community Gateway would encourage and support resident management initiatives and existing tenant and resident associations.

#### **Letting vacant properties**

After the transfer Dacorum Community Gateway would participate in the Council's Choice Based Lettings scheme which aims to ensure empty properties are allocated in a way that promotes choice, reflects needs and encourages the development of sustainable balanced communities.

#### **Sustainable Tenancies**

After the transfer Dacorum Community Gateway would sign up all new tenants as starter tenants. After one year their tenancies would be made full assured tenancies if there were no contravention of tenancy conditions, for example anti-social behaviour.

Dacorum Community Gateway would have a Tenancy Support officer which would help and support vulnerable and disadvantaged tenants to sustain their tenancy.

#### **How would Dacorum Community Gateway be involved in regeneration?**

Dacorum Community Gateway would be the largest single landlord in Dacorum. It would be a key partner with the Council in ensuring that estates were well designed and safe places to live and would recognise its role in meeting the wider expectations of all residents.

Dacorum Community Gateway would work fully with any plans the Council has to regenerate neighbourhoods and would ensure that full and complete consultation took place with its tenants and leaseholders. Dacorum Community Gateway would always ensure it acted in the best interests of its members.

**What would be the implications for community development if tenants voted “no” and homes stayed with the Council?**

In the event of a no vote the Council would have no alternative but to cut back on community development and estate management services. Funding to support any major redevelopment or regeneration which would increase the availability of affordable housing would not exist.

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## **SECTION SIX**

### **Involving you in running the service**

#### **At a glance**

Dacorum Community Gateway would:

- ❑ Put tenant and resident leaseholder involvement at the centre of the development and delivery of all services provided by Dacorum Community Gateway.
- ❑ Provide opportunities for all tenants and resident leaseholders to get involved in the management of their homes and communities at a level which suits them best.
- ❑ Be committed to the developing of meaningful tenant empowerment and involvement.
- ❑ Include a sustainable budget in the business plan to deliver community engagement and local tenant led community projects.
- ❑ Develop a range of ways that customers can tell us what they think and how Dacorum Community Gateway is doing.
- ❑ Develop ways to ensure that vulnerable and ethnic minority tenants have a voice.

#### **What is Dacorum Community Gateway's policy on involving tenants and resident leaseholders?**

As a Community Gateway Dacorum Community Gateway would be owned by tenants and resident leaseholders and put them at the heart of the organisation. This will be a fundamental part of the rules on how the organisation would operate. Dacorum Community Gateway would encourage tenant and resident leaseholders to get involved by:

- ❑ Offering a range of ways for tenants and resident leaseholders to get involved that suits them.
- ❑ Encourage more tenants to develop and get involved in local tenant led projects.
- ❑ Ensure tenants and resident leaseholders are at the heart of decision making and scrutiny of Dacorum Community Gateways performance.
- ❑ Ensure individual tenants have opportunities to influence the decisions made about their homes and neighbourhoods.
- ❑ Listen and act on feedback from tenants and leaseholders on services and proposals.
- ❑ Include a long term sustainable budget in the business plan for tenant and resident leaseholder involvement and local projects.
- ❑ Work with tenants in setting up representative groups and provide start up grants.
- ❑ Provide professional housing training, a resource office and IT facilities for involved tenants and resident leaseholders.

#### **The Tenant Participation Compact**

The Tenant Participation Compact has provided the Council with a focus for the further

development of tenant empowerment in the management of the housing service. Dacorum Community Gateway would honour and strengthen the principles and standards for tenant empowerment that have been negotiated between the Council and its tenants. Dacorum Community Gateway would aim to develop and improve the existing Tenant Participation Compact and Resident Involvement Statement as part of its annual review of tenant involvement. This would be enhanced through the Community Empowerment Strategy and the Community Gateway Committee.

### **Providing information on involvement**

Dacorum Community Gateway would be active in publicising its activities and the ways in which you could get involved. Led by the Community Gateway Committee, Dacorum Community Gateway would produce and distribute a newsletter for all tenants four times a year. It would work to develop ways of measuring and monitoring resident satisfaction with services, for example, through questionnaires and feedback from general meeting events, the results of which would be publicised together with how Dacorum Community Gateway intends to respond.

All members of Dacorum Community Gateway would receive an annual report which would tell you about its performance and how to get involved. Dacorum Community Gateway would also hold an Annual General Meeting each year.

It would produce a new-updated tenants' handbook within six months of the transfer setting out the services available and the main contact points. This would also give tenants more information about their tenancy and Dacorum Community Gateway's policies.

### **Becoming a member of Dacorum Community Gateway**

Dacorum Community Gateway would positively encourage all tenants and resident leaseholders to become members of Dacorum Community Gateway.

Membership would be open to all tenants and resident leaseholders over the age of 16. Where there is a joint tenancy each joint tenant can become a member.

Normally in housing transfers, membership voting rights are collectively held, with tenants holding only a third of the votes. For Dacorum Community Gateway, tenants and resident leaseholders would hold 100% of the membership voting rights.

Members would have a fundamental role in the governance of Dacorum Community Gateway. Members would be able to exercise their right to vote at the Annual General Meeting or any Special Meeting on any Board proposals to change the rules governing Dacorum Community Gateway.

Dacorum Community Gateway would be obliged to provide a report to its general members at every Annual General Meeting on its performance.

### **Monitoring the quality of service**

Dacorum Community Gateway would encourage tenants' groups and the Community Gateway Committee to become involved in monitoring its performance through joint estate inspections with tenants, resident leaseholders and other residents and by regularly

publishing its performance. It would also produce other information, for example newsletters, to these groups and an annual report to all members that explains how Dacorum Community Gateway has performed in the previous year.

**What would happen if tenants vote 'no' and homes stay with the Council.**

There would be a substantially reduced Tenant Participation Budget.

The Council would be unable to support existing Tenant Participation structures and would continue with a basic level of involvement based on the statutory minimum requirements to consult tenants about housing management.

There would be little support available to existing resident groups and no further groups would be supported.

The Council would have to reduce the number of publications circulated to tenants such as the Tenant Compact and the Housing Management Service Newsletter "News and Views".



## **SECTION SEVEN**

### **Tackling anti-social behaviour, crime and nuisance**

At a glance

Dacorum Community Gateway would:

- ❑ Be committed to tackling antisocial behaviour for the benefit of the whole community.
- ❑ Ensure that there was adequate support for reporting antisocial behaviour.
- ❑ Ensure there would be staff in the housing team to provide expert advice and support on anti social behaviour
- ❑ Use 'starter tenancies' for new tenants for the first twelve months of their tenancy.
- ❑ Give clear advice and appropriate support to all tenants and resident leaseholders to help deal with anti social behaviour.
- ❑ Have an agreed arrangement to work closely with the Council and other agencies to resolve more serious cases of anti social behaviour and crime.
- ❑ Work with the Community Gateway Committee to review the effectiveness of the existing policy and procedures and agree improvements.
- ❑ Work proactively with partner agencies, such as the police, to try and resolve problems at a local level before they get out of hand.

#### **Your right to a peaceful environment**

Dacorum Community Gateway believes that all tenants and leaseholders have the right to live peacefully within their home and enjoy their surrounding area. No tenant, leaseholder or resident should be expected to suffer from any form of harassment or anti-social behaviour whilst in their home or neighbourhood.

#### **How would Dacorum Community Gateway deal with anti social behaviour?**

Dacorum Community Gateway would be committed to introducing further improvements in the way in which anti-social behaviour is tackled.

These would include:

- ❑ Ensuring there are staff in the housing team that can provide expert advice and support on anti-social behaviour.
- ❑ Giving clear information and practical advice on what tenants and leaseholders can do to help deal with anti-social behaviour and providing support to those who suffer anti-social behaviour.
- ❑ Using 'starter' tenancies for new tenants for the initial 12 months of their tenancy. This would help Dacorum Community Gateway more easily evict tenants carrying out acts of anti-social behaviour or harassment.

- ❑ Having clauses in the Tenancy Agreement to deal with anti-social behaviour, racial and other harassment, noise and nuisance and ensuring that all tenancy conditions and the potential consequences of breaching the conditions of the Tenancy Agreement are fully explained to new tenants before they move in.
- ❑ Having a clear, understandable antisocial behaviour policy.
- ❑ Taking early and firm action against tenancy breaches which blight neighbourhoods or cause nuisance to others, such as noise, untidy gardens and car repairs.
- ❑ Working with tenants and leaseholders, other residents, the Council, Police, the Youth Offending Service and other agencies to identify local solutions to local problems, such as environmental and physical improvements.
- ❑ Providing access to independent mediation support in appropriate cases.
- ❑ Encouraging reporting of anti-social behaviour, with full support for victims and complainants.
- ❑ Using all its available legal powers to combat anti-social behaviour.
- ❑ Dacorum Community Gateway would, if appropriate, take action to resolve anti-social behaviour problems. It would ask courts to evict tenants or seek Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, injunctions or Demotion Orders or other appropriate legal sanction. Tenants guilty of unacceptable behaviour would risk losing some of their rights and privileges that they enjoy as assured tenants, for example the preserved Right to Buy.
- ❑ Referring tenants where appropriate to a Tenancy Support Service that helps vulnerable tenants establish and keep their tenancies.
- ❑ Encouraging tenants' and residents' associations to establish Neighbourhood Watch schemes.
- ❑ Ensure it works with tenants and leaseholders, the Council, Police, the Youth Offending Service and other agencies to concentrate on reviewing the existing policy and procedures and their effectiveness, and agreeing ways in which they could be improved.

**What additional crime prevention measures would Dacorum Community Gateway carry out?**

Dacorum Community Gateway would carry out security improvements to homes and estates in consultation with tenants and leaseholders where possible. Where possible Dacorum Community Gateway would encourage tenants and leaseholders to develop resident based initiatives by providing grants.

In addition to installing secure doors these could include installing window locks to homes, providing security lighting and upgrading door entry systems, CCTV, fencing and street lighting improvements and providing better protection for communal areas intended for the use of residents only.

Dacorum Community Gateway would develop links with the Dacorum Community Safety Partnership, to work on measures to reduce crime through the improvement programme and through community projects and will also aim to design out crime when considering new developments.

**What would happen if tenants vote 'no' and homes stay with the Council?**

The Council recognises that community safety is an important issue for all our residents. However, a lot of the funding for dealing with anti-social behaviour is provided by the housing neighbourhood wardens. This area of work would have to be reduced in an effort to reduce costs if the transfer did not go ahead. It is likely that the range of estate inspections would not continue at the present level, and there would be no scope for any improvements.

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## **SECTION EIGHT**

### **The next steps**

At a glance.

- ❑ This offer for leaseholders sets out all of the details of the transfer proposal.
- ❑ You can give your views on the proposal using the gummed, postage paid response card at the back of this document.
- ❑ The Council will consider any representations it receives by midday on XXX XXXX 2010.
- ❑ A further letter will set out any changes to the transfer proposal and inform tenants and leaseholders whether the Council has decided to proceed to the vote.

The Council has decided to provide leaseholders with a formal offer on its transfer proposal and undertake a separate formal ballot of leaseholders.

However Government rules state that the final decision on the proposal rests with secure and introductory tenants.

The Council feels it is important that leaseholders have the opportunity to make your views known and will consider any comments you make on the transfer proposal.

#### **Fact**

We want to hear what you think about the proposal.

The Council will aim to visit you to provide you with an opportunity to discuss the transfer proposal. You can also seek advice from the Independent Tenant Advisor on 0800 678 3511 or the Housing Futures Team on 08000 19 33 40. Both of these numbers are free if calling from a UK landline.

If the Council decides to go ahead with a ballot following the consultation you would be able to vote by post, by telephone or by using the internet.

The ballot would be run by an independent organisation called Electoral Reform Services.

**SECTION FOURTEEN**  
**terms.**

**Other information, key contact details and glossary of**

**Tenant Services Authority**

**Enquiries Team**

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Lateral  
8 City Walk  
Leeds LS11 9AT

**National telephone number (for all telephone enquiries): 0845 230 7000**

[www.tenantserviceauthority.org](http://www.tenantserviceauthority.org)

**National Housing Federation**

Lion Court  
Procter Street  
Holborn  
London, WC1V 6NY  
Tel: (0207) 067 1010  
Website: [www.housing.org.uk](http://www.housing.org.uk)

**Independent Housing Ombudsman**

Norman House  
105-109 Strand  
London, WC2R 0AA  
Tel: (0845) 712 5973  
Website: [www.ihos.org.uk](http://www.ihos.org.uk)

**Dacorum Borough Council**

Civic Centre  
Marlowes  
Hemel Hempstead  
Herts.,  
HP1 1HH  
Email: [futureoptions@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:futureoptions@dacorum.gov.uk)  
Council's Freephone Helpline 08000 19 33 40

**Tenants' Independent Advisor (TPAS)**

5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Trafford House  
Chester Road  
Manchester  
M32 0RS  
Freephone number 0800 678 3511

### **Communities and Local Government**

Zone 1/J10 Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London, SW1E 5DU  
Tel: (0303) 44 43744  
Website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

### **Homes and Communities Agency**

Housing Stock Transfer  
7th Floor  
149 Tottenham Court Road  
London.SW1T 7BN.  
Tel: (0300) 1234 500  
Email: [mail@homesandcommunities.co.uk](mailto:mail@homesandcommunities.co.uk)  
Website: [www.homesandcommunities.co.uk](http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk)

### **Dacorum Community Gateway**

C/O Housing Futures  
Room201  
Civic Centre  
Marlowes  
Hemel Hempstead  
Herts.,  
HP1 1HH  
Email: [futureoptions@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:futureoptions@dacorum.gov.uk)  
Council's Freephone Helpline 08000 19 33 40

### **Other key places you can get more information**

As well as this document, there are some other documents you may want to look at in relation to the Council's housing transfer proposal.

**The Way Forward for Housing:** this is the Government's policy statement on future housing policy. Communities and Local Government website:[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

**The Housing Corporation's Charter for housing association applicants and residents:** this document sets out the standards of service you could expect from Dacorum Community Gateway based on the Housing Corporation guidelines – the predecessor to the Tenant Services Authority. The Tenant Services Authority website:[www.tenantservicesauthority.org](http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org)

These documents are available to view on Dacorum Borough Council's website. However if you would like a copy of any of these documents please call the Housing Futures Freephone Helpline on 08000 19 33 40.

Dacorum Borough Council Website:

[www.dacorum.gov.uk/futureoptions](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/futureoptions)

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## **Glossary of Terms used in this document**

### **Arms Length Management Organisation**

Are UK not-for-profit companies set up by local authorities primarily to manage and improve all or part of their housing stock. Ownership of the housing stock itself normally stays with the local authority

### **Assured tenancy**

This is the legal type of tenancy which would be offered by Dacorum Community Gateway if the transfer goes ahead. It is governed primarily by the Housing Act 1988. It is a contract where your rights and obligations are set down in the tenancy agreement and which (except for rent and service charges) can only be changed by agreement of both tenant and landlord or by an Act of Parliament. If Dacorum Community Gateway wanted to end your assured tenancy, it must serve a notice seeking possession and obtain a court order.

### **Assured tenants**

If the transfer goes ahead, tenants who are currently with the Council as secure tenants would become assured tenants with Dacorum Community Gateway. As assured tenants, your rights would be partly protected by Acts of Parliament and partly by a legally binding contract with Dacorum Community Gateway (under your new tenancy agreement). Under the terms of your tenancy agreement, your security of tenure would match as far as possible that which you currently enjoy as a secure Council tenant.

### **Ballot**

As introduced by the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, it is now compulsory to hold a ballot to determine the opinion of tenants on the proposal of housing stock transfer. It would be carried out and administered by an independent organisation, such as Electoral Reform Services; part of the Electoral Reform Society.

### **Board**

Should the transfer take place the Board would be made up of 15 people, seven tenants/resident leaseholders, three Council nominees and five independents that would be referred to as Board Members. If the transfer goes ahead it would be the Board that would make decisions about how Dacorum Community Gateway is run and managed and how its local strategic objectives are achieved.

### **Budget**

The amount of money an organisation estimates it would spend over a certain time period, often one to six years, on a particular activity.

### **Business Plan**

The document which sets out an organisation's plans for its future operations and development with proposed costs and income. It helps the Board plan strategically. This would be used by Dacorum Community Gateway to demonstrate to the Government, the



Tenant Services Authority (the Government's appointed regulator) and to lenders that the organisation has clear aims and objectives and sound development and financial strategies to deliver its promises and services.

**Contract**

A legally binding agreement between two or more parties.

**Community Gateway**

To be added

**Community Gateway Committee**

To be added

**Communities and Local Government**

The Government department currently responsible for housing.

**Dacorum Community Gateway**

A new organisation created by the Council with tenants which would take over ownership of the Council's housing should tenants vote for the transfer.

**Dacorum Community Gateway Shadow Board**

The group of people who would become the Board of Dacorum Community Gateway if the transfer goes ahead (see also Board).

**Dacorum Community Gateway Standard**

A standard of home and estate and neighbourhood improvements which exceeds the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

**Decent Homes Standard**

A set of minimum standards for Council homes set by the Government in 2000

**Environmental Works**

These are the repairs and improvements that would be carried out to the environment, or area around your home, including works to footpaths, grassed areas, car parking and fencing.

**Financial Services Authority**

The Financial Services Authority is an independent non-governmental body which has taken over the regulatory role of the former Registry of Friendly Societies. It is the body that Industrial and Provident Societies must be registered with.

**Formal Consultation Document**

This document, which is part of a legally prescribed consultation process, and which is being sent by the Council to all tenants for consultation on the proposal to transfer its homes to Dacorum Community Gateway. It sets out the promises that Dacorum Community Gateway would deliver if tenants vote in favour of the transfer.

### **Housing Associations**

These are not-for-profit organisations registered with and regulated by the Tenant Services Authority. They primarily exist to own and manage affordable rented social housing. They are also known as Registered Social Landlords (see Registered Providers).

### **Housing Corporation**

The Housing Corporation was a Government sponsored body that previously regulated housing associations and funded housing development. In December 2008, its regulatory role was taken over by the Tenant Services Authority and its funding role by the Homes and Communities Agency.

### **Improvements**

Works over and above day-to-day repairs, that are intended to help bring your home up to a modern standard.

### **Independent Tenant Advisor**

An advisor appointed to advise tenants on the process of housing transfer and to provide independent and impartial advice.

### **Industrial and Provident Society**

An organisation conducting an activity for the benefit of the community and which is registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965, and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

### **Inflation**

This is the average amount by which prices go up or down measured by the United Kingdom Index of Retail Prices (all items).

### **Membership**

A legal mechanism for ownership of an organisation where each member would be entitled to own a share and which thereby entitles them to have a collective say in how the organisation is run and its rules.

### **Not-for-profit**

Any housing association, like Dacorum Community Gateway, must be not-for-profit. This means that if it has any surplus income it must follow Tenant Services Authority guidelines and its own constitutional rules which state that it must use it for housing related purposes or its other charitable objectives.

### **Preserved Right to Buy**

If you have the Right to Buy your home as a secure tenant of the Council, you would continue to have this right with Dacorum Community Gateway. It means that tenants who transfer from the Council can still buy their home with any discount they have accumulated.

### **Private Finance Initiative**

An operational framework which transfers responsibility, but not accountability, for the delivery of public services to private companies and aims to deliver services such as maintenance and improvements.

### **TPAS**

Your independent advisor. TPAS Consultants is an independent organisation that advises and supports tenants and leaseholders on housing transfer issues.

### **Registered Providers (currently Registered Social Landlords)**

Registered Providers, which include housing associations, are bodies that provide affordable homes to people in housing need and that will be registered with the Government appointed Regulator of Social Housing, the Tenant Services Authority under new regulatory arrangements that were introduced from 1st December 2008.

### **Right of Succession**

The right of tenants to pass on their home.

### **Right to Acquire**

A scheme to give eligible tenants of housing associations the right to purchase their home from their landlord at a discount. Both transferring and future tenants may be eligible.

### **Right to Buy**

Gives eligible Council tenants the Right to Buy their homes with discounts. The Preserved Right to Buy is given to eligible Council tenants whose homes transfer to a housing association.

### **Secure tenancy**

The vast majority of local authority tenants, and housing association tenants whose tenancies began before 15 January 1989, are secure tenants and have a range of rights as set out in law under the Housing Act 1985.

### **Service Charges**

The money tenants, leaseholders and freeholders pay for services such as grass cutting, communal lighting and cleaning.

### **Sheltered housing**

Housing for older people, or people with support needs with some communal facilities and support staff.

### **Stock Condition Survey**

An independent survey of the condition of the Council's homes designed to inform what works need doing and how much money needs to be spent to bring them up to a modern standard.

### **Supporting People**

Supporting People is a Government policy and funding framework for delivering accommodation based support to vulnerable people in different types of accommodation, including sheltered housing and across all tenures.

**Tenant Management Organisation (TMO)**

Are tenant-controlled organisations, which provide a varying range of management and maintenance services to tenants under a Management Agreement with their landlord

**Tenancy agreement**

The legal contract made between you and your landlord, which sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, and their rights and responsibilities as a landlord.

**Tenant Services Authority**

The new Government sponsored regulator of Social Housing established in December 2008 which has taken over from the Housing Corporation as the appointed body that regulates all registered providers, including housing associations.

**Transfer**

Transfer of the management and ownership of the Council's homes to a new not-for-profit local housing association.

**SECTION FIFTEEN**  
**us what you think.**

**Stage One Consultation Feedback – your chance to tell**

**YOUR TEAR OFF SLIP TO REPLY TO THE COUNCIL WITH ANY COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE.**

What are your views of the Council's proposal to transfer its homes to Dacorum Community Gateway? It is your right by law to have your say. We want to hear from you once you have read the document.

This is not the ballot but a chance for you to tell us what you think. All views will be considered before the Council decides whether to hold a formal ballot.

**TEAR OFF THIS SLIP AND RETURN IT IN THE PRE-PAID ENVELOPE TO REACH THE COUNCIL BY.....**

**Remember, this is NOT the ballot**

**RESPONSE**

On the basis of the information that you have received so far, what are your views on the proposed transfer to Dacorum Community Gateway?

☐

I am generally in favour

☐

I am generally against

☐

I need more information/am undecided

Please write your views below indicating what you like, or dislike, about the details of the proposed transfer as set out in this document.

.....

.....

.....

(Continue overleaf if you wish)

Would you like someone from the Council or Independent Tenant Advisor to contact you, to answer any questions? If so please fill in your name, address and phone number.

Name: .....

Address.....

.....

.....

I would like to be contacted by:

☐

Independent Tenant Advisor

☐

The Council

Phone Number at Home: .....

Daytime Phone No: .....

Email address: .....

BUSINESS REPLY SERVICE

**Housing Futures Team  
Room 201  
Dacorum Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Hemel Hempstead  
Herts. HP1 1HH**

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