

Report of Chief Officer, Housing Management

Report to Housing Advisory Board

Date: 3 June 2014

Subject: Tenant Engagement Update

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. When the housing management service transferred into the Council in October 2013, it was necessary to develop a citywide Tenant Engagement Framework in order to ensure that a consistent approach was taken to tenant engagement.
2. Since October, officers have been working with tenants to develop detailed structures within the framework. This paper provides an update on progress made with the development of detailed structures.

Recommendations

3. That Housing Advisory Board note and comment on the contents of the report and the current position regarding tenant engagement.
4. That Housing Advisory Board request a further report to highlight in more detail, the geographies and customer groups that are currently un-represented or under-represented and how we will try and tackle this as part of the new service.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To update the Housing Advisory Board on progress made in the development of the Housing Leeds tenant engagement service.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Following the transfer into Leeds City Council on 1 October 2013, the three customer involvement teams have been working together on the tenant engagement agenda, seeking to adopt common and consistent practices so as to deliver an effective single service.
- 2.2 A key priority for Housing Leeds is to develop a tenant engagement and community development framework which builds on the positive work carried out by the former ALMOs, but based on one citywide involvement framework. Officers are in the process of working with tenants to develop a citywide tenant involvement approach which gives tenants a stronger strategic influence in decision making than has previously been the case.
- 2.3 In designing a single tenant engagement service, we are also able to make a number of improvements to give tenants a greater opportunity to influence service delivery at a local level.
- 2.4 As a social landlord we are required to meet the Homes and Communities Agency's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. This standard makes the landlord responsible for ensuring that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in developing housing related policies regarding housing services, decision making, setting services standards, scrutiny of performance, the management of repairs and maintenance services, and agreeing local offers for service delivery. This report how we are doing this, and the progress made towards a more effective and consistent single tenant engagement service.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The Housing Leeds Tenant Engagement Framework is now well developed with opportunities for tenant engagement at both a strategic and local level. Inter-relationships of the various groups in the framework have also been clearly defined. The Framework is currently being put into practice with support from officers, in order to embed the arrangements as quickly as possible. An outline of the Tenant Engagement Framework is outlined in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Staffing structures to support the Tenant Engagement Framework are currently being developed in consultation with key tenant representatives. Housing Leeds is committed to providing appropriately experienced and effective staffing resources to support Housing Leeds tenant engagement and community development activity.
- 3.3 Outlined below is an update on progress which has been made with the development of tenant engagement groups within the framework.

3.4 Tenant Scrutiny Board (TSB)

- 3.4.1 In line with the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, each of the former ALMOs had a Tenant Scrutiny Panel which undertook evidence-based scrutiny inquiries and reported improvement recommendations to the Board.

- 3.4.2 The former members of these scrutiny panels now sit on a city-wide Tenant Scrutiny Board (TSB), which sits within the council's scrutiny function and is co-ordinated by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development. The role of this Board will be to challenge and drive improvements to the housing service, working alongside the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board. Communication and links between the Tenant Scrutiny Board and other tenant involvement forums and channels are critical, to ensure that all tenants have a voice and are represented at the Scrutiny Board, and can see what has been achieved as a result of tenant scrutiny.
- 3.4.3 The first joint Scrutiny Board met on 16 April 2014. Stephen Ilee was elected as chair and Barry Stanley as vice chair. Terms of reference and a code of conduct have been agreed.
- 3.4.4 The Centre of Public Scrutiny have been employed to deliver training and support to the Tenant Scrutiny Board, focusing particularly on topic selection and work programming, scoping and carrying out a scrutiny review, questioning and listening skills, and assessing information, drawing conclusions and recommendations. develop the group and the work programme.
- 3.4.5 The next meeting is scheduled for 5 June where the Board will receive details of performance information and service initiatives, from which they will begin to develop a work programme of scrutiny enquiries.
- 3.5 Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) and Cross City Chairs Group (CCCG)**
- 3.5.6 The 11 former area panels are now operating as Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs), with a strengthened and consistent Terms of Reference following its approval at the last Housing Advisory Board meeting.
- 3.5.7 Each HAP has a budget of £120k to invest in local environmental and community projects. An interim budget approval process has been agreed to ensure that emerging projects can be delivered without delay. A longer term approval process is currently being developed. Each HAP is in the process of developing a 'plan on a page' which outlines both the service and funding priorities for the panel area, which demonstrates how the HAP will support the city priorities whilst taking into account the make-up and needs of the local area. An example of a 'plan on a page' is attached in Appendix 2.
- 3.5.8 The 11 Chairs have come together to form the Cross City Chairs Group (CCCG) to represent tenants and their panel activity at a city-wide level. It will also be a forum to share good practice and raise concerns, and if necessary, escalate these to the Housing Advisory Board. This forum has been meeting regularly since November 2013, and has been key in establishing the new working arrangements for the HAPs. Terms of reference for this group were agreed by the HAB on the 8th April 2014.
- 3.5.9 The CCCG met for an away day on the 23rd April at which they received a presentation on both the council's values and best city priorities, as well as the themes of the new housing strategy. This was an important session as it enabled Chairs to appreciate the role of HAPs within a citywide context and provided

Chairs with an opportunity to influence the delivery of council wide priorities through the development of their plan on a page and work programme.

3.5.10 At a recent CCCG meeting on the 7th May, the chairs supported a common application form, supporting guidance notes and a code of conduct. This, in addition to the already approved terms of reference, puts in place the key documentation required. A full forward work programme has been developed by officers with a range of tasks (for example, developing our approach to marketing, recruitment and training) and the delivery of this will be monitored as a standard agenda item at all CCCG meetings.

3.5.11 Projects recently supported by the panels includes:

- £12,280 for Opportunity Shops (Gipsil) - enhanced work clubs providing email and internet access, help with CVs and job applications, and one-to-one planning and support. The project also seeks to engage young people and other members of the community in volunteering and work experience opportunities and other activities such as gardening and sports.
- £2,500 for Brayton Green communal garden- this project will provide enhancements for 30 sheltered housing residents including raised beds, a new seating area and new path making it more accessible.
- £4,500 for Hillside community bin storage area- This project will both tidy up courtyard by reducing and managing bins and maximise parking spaces on site.
- £5000 for Friday Youth Hub (Street Works Soccer)- this project provides activities in a safe environment that assists in making the community a safer place as it runs at the identified times when anti-social behaviour in the area is reported as at its highest. The project attracts approximately 45 young people per session and gives young people the opportunity to enjoy themselves and socialise in a safe environment with their friends as an alternative to hanging around the streets, giving the perception of being anti-social

3.5.12 The panels have chosen not to support some projects, where they have not been able to identify a clear benefit to tenants or the city-wide priorities. For example, one area did not agree to fund £8,000 for a war memorial in a local village.

3.6 Service or Customer Specific Forums

3.6.1 Work is underway to develop service or customer specific forums which represent the views of particular groups across the city. The most well developed group of this type is the High Rise Group, which is a citywide group to represent tenants and leaseholders living in high rise flats. The first meeting of the High Rise Group took place on 4 April where Andy Liptrot was appointed as chair. Future meetings will be held on a bi-monthly basis. A sub-group was established to develop terms of reference. A draft 'plan on a page' has been developed for the group. This is attached in Appendix 3.

3.6.2 Other work is underway to develop other citywide forums, including customer specific forums for older, disabled and LGBT tenants and leaseholders.

3.7 Community Development

3.7.1 Community development in Housing Management contributes to the Department of Communities and Local Government priorities for 2014, namely building strong united communities that are safe and resilient. The work also contributes to one of the 3 outcomes set out in the Best Council Plan 2013-17, which is about improving 'the quality of life for our residents, particularly those who are vulnerable and in poverty' and is supported by the underpinning value of working with communities and treating people fairly. Community development focuses on ensuring that tenants have the confidence, self-esteem and skills to be involved and contribute to their communities.

3.7.2 Since the establishment of Housing Leeds it was identified that the focus of tenant involvement practice has varied significantly across the three areas of the City. Work has been undertaken to map the extent and range of community development activities across the City. The work has focused on residents and tenants groups, community activity groups and community engagement activity.

3.7.3 The focus for the community development work can be summarised as helping groups to set their agenda and action plan, supporting them to build their skills through experience or training and helping to develop the self-sustainability of the group in the longer term.

3.7.4 Community engagement activity at the present time operates at two levels. Level one is concerned with those issues identified by tenants as meeting a need for improving everyday life, such as IT training, DIY skills, roadshows, volunteer schemes, ESOL classes, etc. Data is unavailable on many of these but estimates given suggest that in 2013-14 around 15,000 tenants attended over 40 programmes/events. The second level activity relates to supporting people to improve their life chances. Key offerings are focused on accredited activity such as personal development (6 programmes), worklessness (8 programmes), digital inclusion (10 programmes), social integration of vulnerable tenants (2 ongoing programmes) and young citizenship programmes (4 ongoing programmes). Work is underway to identify those elements of the above community engagement programmes that should be incorporated into a consistent offer across the City.

3.8 Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF)

3.8.1 LTF represents the views of tenants across all sectors and tenures in Leeds.

3.8.2 LTF's core objectives are:

To represent Leeds tenants and residents at a strategic level in city wide and regional decision making;

Support tenants and residents of Leeds to participate in decisions about their homes and communities; and

Promote best practice in resident involvement across housing tenures.

- 3.8.3 LTF gives tenants a voice in decision making and influencing policy/strategy. It is represented on the Housing Forum, Homeless Forum, Welfare Reform Operational Group and it is suggested on the Housing Management Advisory Board.
- 3.8.4 LTF undertakes regional and national lobbying. It is involved in TAROE (Tenants and Residents of England), TPAS (Tenant Participation and Advisory Service) Defend Council Housing and historically represents a significant voice on the regional and national scene.
- 3.8.5 A key priority over the next few months is to work with LTF to strengthen the links between LTF and Housing Leeds, and to ensure that the LTF are embedded within the overall Housing Leeds Tenant Engagement Framework.

3.9 Tenants and Residents Associations and Community Voices

- 3.9.1 There are currently 103 active residents and tenants groups in Leeds, mostly clustered in the inner city areas. Around a quarter of these groups need some form of support to help them reach a point where they can operate independently and to reach their full potential. Other groups require very little support and are active in setting their own agendas and tackling community issues beyond an interest in social housing.

We recognise that some areas have little or no active tenants or residents associations. The reasons for this can vary. For example, the Swarcliffe estate once had 3 large active groups at a period of time when extensive refurbishment and estate re-modelling was taking place in the early 2000's. Swarcliffe now has some of the highest satisfaction ratings in the city and some of the highest demand stock. This may mean tenants and residents are less inclined to want to form groups in response to any perceived need for improvement. Another reason can be that in more rural or dispersed areas with fewer Council properties such as Otley, Rawdon and Horsforth there is less desire for residents to be involved, particularly if the socio-economic make-up of an area means that residents are more likely to be in full-time employment and less likely to have time to commit to participating.

More work is needed for the service to understand the make-up and aspirations and expectations of areas and what the issues are to be able to offer the right outlet for tenant and residents to get involved. The offer to support communities with the creation of a tenants or residents group is one option as part of a range of engagement activities the service will be able to offer as a standard 'menu' approach to tenant engagement in future.

The current focus is on developing more consistent support to tenants and residents associations, including the development of key information, registration processes for annual support grants and training and development activity.

- 3.9.2 There are also 98 tenant community activity groups. Over half of these are support groups based on a common and shared need e.g. youth, LGBT, women, elderly, single parents, vulnerable people (54 groups). The remaining 44 groups are activity related e.g. sports, arts, media and gardening. By far the most popular

community activity is gardening with 26 groups engaged in RHS 'In Bloom' or 'Its' Your Neighbourhood' and other gardening programmes. In developing a service offer for overall tenant and community engagement activity the service needs to take into account the value these community groups give to creating sustainable communities and how the service adopts a supportive partnership approach to working with them. Further work to consult with groups to gain clarity on the necessary overall offer is required.

3.10 Marketing and Communications

- 3.10.1 In response to feedback from tenants, and one of the themes from the tenants conference, Housing Leeds is looking to develop a specialist marketing and communication function within Housing Management which will co-ordinate communications with tenants and leaseholders. This will help to create a more consistent and proactive communication with tenants.
- 3.10.2 The tenant newsletter, due out mid-June, will give an overall update on the new involvement framework. The Tenant Involvement Framework, as outlined in Appendix 1, will be included as an A3 centre spread, to include an outline of the roles of each group type and a contact list of all active community groups in Leeds that they can become involved with.
- 3.10.3 The new single 0800 number is being actively promoted with the main launch being from the June newsletter. This will also inform tenants that they can attend any Housing office and receive the same level of service.

3.11 Monitoring activity and outcomes.

- 3.11.1 The service is currently standardising our engagement software tool, known as 'Arena Tracker', to record all our tenant engagement activity. This software allows the service to understand who is involved in what type of activity, identify which groups are under represented and to collate the outcomes of activity by some standard themes, e.g. whether the engagement resulted in policy development or change the way that services are delivered, did we communicate key messages or did it help improve the skills, confidence and capacity of the local community.
- 3.11.2 The service envisages making good use of the software as it will enable us to undertake targeted recruitment to a number of new and emerging important engagement functions.
- 3.11.3 The software is used by over 50 social landlords and allows engagement teams to network with each other and share good practice. The software also gives teams the tools to issue localised emailing and texting (in line with data protection practices) to help promote localised engagement activity.

3.12 Equality analysis

- 3.12.1 Like all services, the engagement service needs to understand who they are engaging with to ensure that we deliver services as well as develop and make decisions with input from a healthy representation of people. In this respect, we

are able to use 'Arena Tracker' which is populated with the protected characteristics and other important information about our tenants and residents so that we can analyse who we engage with. By virtue of knowing who we engage with, we know who we aren't, so we can target our future activity to ensure we are capturing the views of a diverse range of customers. For example, if we know that there is an under-representation of BME people involved in the Housing Advisory Panels, the service can target recruitment at BME tenants via BME organisations and third parties.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.13 Consultation and Engagement

4.13.2 Key themes for how we engage with tenants and develop the new service offer were discussed with tenants at the 'Better Together', tenants conference on the 27th February 2014 following a consultation exercise with over 400 responses. Feedback from this event has been previously shared with HAB members.

4.13.3 Individual forums (like the high rise group and the housing advisory panels) have been consulted during the course of their creation or development.

4.13.4 An overall update on the new involvement landscape, and the clearer strategic voice tenants now have, will be presented to tenants in the June 14 tenants newsletter.

4.14 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.14.1 Equality and diversity considerations will be taken into account in developing the new service, including:

- Equality monitoring of engaged tenants to understand the extent to which the diversity of tenants is represented;
- Targeted recruitment in any under-represented groups for local and city-wide forums;
- Housing Advisory Panels 'plan on a page' incorporates equality and community profiling data so local panels understand the needs of local communities and can strive to support them accordingly;
- The development of a marketing and communications strategy, integrated with our engagement structure, that will consider how key messages are communicated to and from all our tenant engagement forums and that are accessible by a diverse range of customers;
- A training and development programme for all involved tenants that will raise awareness of equality issues;
- A Code of Conduct for key forums to ensure discriminatory or offensive behaviours are challenged;

- Meeting the needs of specific customer groups in our programme of community development work, supporting tenants into work, skills and training; and
- Supporting the large network of tenants, residents and community groups to adopt open and accessible practices.

4.15 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.15.1 The service's tenant engagement activity helps us to deliver the Best Council objective to 'ensure high quality public services- improving quality, efficiency and involving people in shaping their city.'
- 4.15.2 The service also helps to support the Best City for Communities priority to increase the sense of belonging that builds cohesive and harmonious communities.

4.16 Resources and value for money

- 4.16.1 Tenant engagement and community development activity is a key priority for the new Housing Leeds service as it is essential to the delivery of an effective housing management service and a sustainable housing stock. Sustainable communities offer an opportunity for reduced service costs, e.g. in tackling ASB and tenancy management issues. They also offer an opportunity for reduced service costs in other council service areas, e.g. Environmental Services, Adult Social Care and Children's Services.
- 4.16.2 In recognising the importance of tenant engagement and community development offering value for money, across the city HAPs now receive over £1.3m resources to support community based projects.

4.17 Legal Implications

- 4.17.1 The engagement structure has been developed in line with The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing 2012. In particular: 'Providers are expected to engage meaningfully with their tenants and offer them opportunities to shape the tailoring of services to reflect local priorities. Tenants should have the ability to scrutinise their provider's performance, identify areas for improvement and influence future delivery'.

4.18 Risk Management

- 4.18.1 The main risk in the development of the Tenant Engagement Framework is that the framework does not deliver to its full potential the expectations of tenants and leaseholders, and doesn't deliver sustainable communities within Leeds.
- 4.18.2 In order to minimise this risk a Tenant Engagement and Community Development Service has been established within Housing Leeds, which will co-ordinate tenant engagement activity across the city. A key role of this service will be to work with tenants within the framework to identify and act on issues, review the framework on a periodic basis and ensure ongoing service improvement.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Significant progress has been made to date to develop the Tenant Engagement Framework and basic structures are now in place. A key priority for the next few months is to work with groups to identify priorities for the coming year, and to support groups to deliver consistent tenant engagement and community development activity across the city.
- 5.2 Another priority is to support groups in developing appropriate relationships with other groups within the framework to ensure that there is a clear route for the communication which ensures that tenants have a genuine opportunity to influence service development, whether at a local or strategic level.

6 Recommendations

That Housing Advisory Board note and comment on the contents of the report and the current position regarding tenant engagement.

That Housing Advisory Board request a further report to highlight in more detail, the geographies and customer groups that are currently un-represented or under-represented and how we will try and tackle this as part of the new service.

7 Background documents

- 7.1 Appendix 1: Tenant Engagement Framework
- 7.2 Appendix 2: Housing Advisory Panel 'plan on a page'
- 7.3 Appendix 3: High Rise Group 'plan on a page'