

**Report of: Head of Neighbourhood Services, Housing Management**

**Report to: Chief Officer of Housing Management**

**Date: 06 June 2014**

**Subject: Leeds Tenant Federation - Annual Grant 2014/15**

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

### Summary of main issues

1. Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF) is the strategic tenants representative group for the city. LTF has been grant funded by the Council since it became independent from the council 6 years ago. LTF currently has officer support seconded from Leeds City Council (2 full-time, 1 vacant full-time post, and 1 part-time post). These officers are now line managed within the Housing Management division of Housing Leeds.
2. The Council has a partnership agreement with LTF, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of each party, and outlines the funding provided to support the activities of LTF. This is reviewed on an annual basis.
3. Housing Leeds is currently undertaking a review of its tenant and community involvement activity in order to support the development of a citywide tenant involvement approach. As a key partner of Housing Leeds in delivering tenant involvement it is timely to review the relationship with Leeds Tenants Federation. It is proposed that the review is completed during 2014.
4. It is therefore proposed that the 2013/14 partnership agreement is extended, until the completion of the review.

### Recommendations

- 1 That the Chief Officer of Housing Management approves –
  - Housing Leeds to work with Leeds Tenants Federation to review the future relationship as the strategic tenant body supporting tenants in Leeds.

- The extension of the 2013/14 LTF Partnership Agreement until completion of the review.
- That a Development Plan be established with LTFs Board to support the delivery of the new relationship.

## **Purpose of this report**

1 The purpose of this report is to outline plans to review the relationship with Leeds Tenants Federation and to seek approval to the extension of the 2013/14 Partnership Agreement, pending this review taking place.

## **2 Background information**

2.1 The council has grant funded the Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF) for the past 6 years since they became independent of the council. The grant is reviewed and approved annually.

2.2 The main objectives of LTF are:

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

2.4 To support the tenants and residents of Leeds to participate in decisions about their homes and communities; and

2.5 To promote best practice in resident involvement across housing tenures.

## **3 Main issues**

3.1 Since the housing management service was brought back in house last autumn, Housing Leeds has been reviewing its tenant and community involvement activity to ensure that there is a consistent service provided across the city. The main focus of the review to date has been on the development of the Housing Advisory Panels, which have carried on the work of the Area Panels, and the development of Tenant Scrutiny arrangements. This work will continue over the next year, to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to other tenant involvement and community development activity across the city which builds on areas of good practice across the city.

3.2 As a key partner of Housing Leeds in delivering tenant involvement, it is timely to review the relationship between Housing Leeds and Leeds Tenants Federation. LTF have had inconsistent and changing relationships with the former ALMOs and it is important that the role of LTF is re-established as part of the overall tenant engagement framework within Housing Leeds.

3.3 Housing Leeds strongly supports the existence of a strategic body which represents the views of tenants and residents in Leeds and works in partnership with Housing Leeds to ensure that the views of tenants are taken into consideration in policy development and service delivery. LTF has a strong reputation regionally and nationally as it enables tenants to participate at all levels including in the decision making process or influencing policy and strategy as well as on a less formal level.

3.4 The LTF service plan is based on achieving the following 3 core objectives:

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

- 3.4.2 To support the tenants and residents of Leeds to participate in decisions about their homes and communities
- 3.4.3 To promote best practice in resident involvement across housing tenures
- 3.5 An SWOT analysis has been completed which incorporates the views of LTF Board Members and officers from a number of away days and meetings. This is outlined below.

Strengths	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Officers</b> - Experienced and long-serving staffing team</li> <li>- <b>Influence</b> - LTF representative sitting on the Housing Advisory Board giving influence at the highest level</li> <li>- <b>National links</b> with organisations such as TAROE and TPAS</li> <li>- <b>Recent partnership projects</b> with Housing Leeds have been very successful (e.g. hate crime conference)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Officers</b> - Inconsistency of staffing over recent years (several different coordinators in post) has affected continuity and capacity</li> <li>- <b>LTF</b> - Changes over recent years to the Board of Directors have put pressure on current Directors</li> <li>- There are currently a small group of dedicated and loyal members, but <b>not representative</b> of the city as a whole</li> <li>- <b>Local Authority Resources</b> – cuts to housing services may result in a reduction of future service delivery and funding to LTF</li> </ul>
Opportunities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Increasing membership – private rented sector and Housing Associations</b> - To work closely with Strategic Housing and increase membership with the private rented sector</li> <li>- <b>Increasing membership – Housing Leeds</b> – tenancy agreement could automatically enrol tenants as members unless they opt out – membership should be a right for all tenants. Instant membership would reduce Officer time spent recruiting members</li> <li>- <b>Access to services</b> - Links on the Council website would increase access to services</li> <li>- <b>Board of Directors</b> - Support the Board to look at sustainability for the future</li> <li>- <b>Income generation</b> - External funding could be sought to increase sustainability and reduce dependency on LCC</li> <li>- <b>Commissioning from other sources</b> - Securing external funding from for example, clinical commissioning groups, other directorates who need research to be conducted with certain groups</li> <li>- <b>Support to TRA's</b> - Support plan developed and health-check completed and annual recognition grant given on the basis of this (<i>function currently delivered inside tenant involvement teams</i>)</li> <li>- <b>Designated Tenants Panel</b> – this function would complement the Federations scrutiny function and support tenants by working to resolve complaints</li> <li>- <b>Representation</b> – targeting of under-represented group to have influence</li> <li>- <b>Influence</b> – opportunity to involve members in the Housing Review</li> <li>- <b>Improving Council services</b> – quarterly LTF meetings could increase their remit to include consultation with members and recommendations on how to improve services provided to tenants. At each meeting workshops could be held on a variety of topics, complimented by a tenant wide survey. Research papers would be drawn up based on</li> </ul>	

this, and recommendations made. *(function currently delivered inside tenant involvement teams)*

- **Equipping tenants with the skills to make informed decisions** - Bespoke training courses delivered to support local TRA's and community groups
- **Specialists in tenant empowerment** - Training courses for LCC staff on tenant empowerment and effective consultation/user involvement helping staff better understand the user. *(function currently delivered inside tenant involvement)*
- **Improving access and connectivity** - Showcasing examples of good practice e.g. within tenants and resident associations to motivate and enthuse other groups

3.5 The Head of Neighbourhood Services has discussed the review of the relationship with the LTF Board in late May 2014 and it has been agreed that the review will formally begin after the LTF's Annual General Meeting on 14 June.

3.6 As part of the discussion with the Board in May the following areas were identified as a priority for consideration:

- What strategic role should be performed by the LTF on behalf of Housing Leeds tenants?
- What relationship should LTF then have with other tenant involvement groups within Housing Leeds – Area Panels, registered tenant groups, Tenants Scrutiny Board.
- How to ensure that LTF is integrated into the Housing Leeds tenant involvement framework whilst recognising its independence. How can partnership be improved?
- How can Housing Leeds support LTF to strengthen its leadership and strategic role?
- What improvements can be made to the officer support provided to LTF and how best should this be provided.
- How to ensure that LTF is fully briefed on Housing Leeds general developments.

3.7 The lead officer for the review will be the Head of Neighbourhood Services. Lorna Bustard will co-ordinate the review on behalf of Housing Leeds, with support from the officers supporting the LTF.

## 4 Corporate Considerations

### 4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 LTF undertook two Away Days, one with Officers and one with the Board of Directors in July 2013. Information gathered on these days form the basis of this report and specific ideas resulting from these meetings are contained within the strengths, threats and opportunity table.

### 4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 LTF is an inclusive organisation that provides a voice to tenants from all tenures irrespective of their age, race, gender or other protected characteristic. They

support tenants to participate at all levels, whether it be in decision making or influencing policy and strategy or on a more informal level by getting involved in consultation events.

- 4.2.2 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening exercise has been completed and this demonstrates that appropriate consideration has been given to the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration on the proposal to undertake a review of the relationship with LTF and extend the existing partnership agreement until the review has been completed.

#### **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 Supporting a strategic tenants' body such as LTF significantly contributes to giving the tenants of Leeds a voice thereby contributing to creating cohesive and harmonious communities, one of the city priorities.

#### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 There was a budget allocation of £86k for LTF for 2013/14. This budget is based on projected spend, which is paid quarterly in arrears, upon proof of accounts.
- 4.4.2 This budget does not include staffing costs for four employees, three FTEs and one 0.6 FTE. These are paid from within the HRA budget. For the financial year 2013-14, the staffing costs were £116,173.00. The staff are seconded to the LTF on a long term basis.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 This report is not eligible for call in.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 It is important that the review of the relationship between Housing Leeds and LTF is completed as soon as possible, in order to ensure that its role becomes strengthened within the Housing Leeds Tenants and Community Involvement framework.
- 4.6.2 The Co-ordinator/Manager post is currently vacant which impacts on the level of support which can be provided to the LTF. In order to ensure some consistency of management support to the Board and officers supporting LTF, a manager from the Housing Leeds tenant engagement service will provide some interim support to LTF until the review is completed. This officer will also be responsible for co-ordinating the review.

### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Housing Leeds strongly supports the existence of a strategic body which represents the views of tenants and residents in Leeds and works in partnership with Housing Leeds to ensure that the views of tenants are taken into consideration in policy development and service delivery. As a key partner of Housing Leeds in delivering tenant involvement, it is timely to review the relationship between Housing Leeds

and Leeds Tenants Federation to ensure that the LTF has a strengthened role within the Housing Leeds tenant and community involvement framework.

## 6 **Recommendations**

That the Chief Officer of Housing Management approves –

- Housing Leeds to work with Leeds Tenants Federation to review the future relationship as the strategic tenant body supporting tenants in Leeds.
- The extension of the 2013/14 LTF Partnership Agreement until completion of the review.
- That a Development Plan be established with LTFs Board to support the delivery of the new relationship.

## 7 **Background documents**<sup>1</sup>

- 7.1 Partnership agreement between Leeds Tenants Federation and Leeds City Council.

---

<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.