

Report of Chief Officer Housing Management

Report to Housing Advisory Board

Date: 7th September 2015

Subject: Tenant Engagement Update

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
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?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

The tenant involvement framework is now taking shape and is now at a stage where the vision has become reality and tenants can see how they fit in and contribute to influencing decisions at both a local and strategic level. This report provides insight into recent developments.

The report will outline:

- Our progress with the strategic tenant body (STB)
- How Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF) contribute to the vision
- Our support for Tenants & Residents Associations (TARA's)
- How the newly formed city wide tenant groups work
- Recent Housing Advisory Panel (HAP) work

Recommendations

That the Housing Advisory Board:

- Recognises the new city wide and strategic groups
- Supports the overall approach and direction of travel to create an engaged and representative tenant base within Leeds.

1 **Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To update the Housing Advisory Board on progress made in the development of tenant involvement and the newly formed citywide groups, their names and strategic priorities.

2 **Background information**

- 2.1 The first 12 months saw the integration of staffing resources and foundations being laid for the vision for the new service. This included the development of single processes, either newly created or by taking best practice from existing ones.
- 2.2 During the second year, development and recruitment to the new city wide groups has taken place. Some of these were already established to some degree, but have been refreshed to ensure fair representation across the city and to re align terms of reference and codes of conduct.
- 2.3 A number of citywide tenant forums have taken place, to reach out to specific tenant groups to help us to understand what their needs and expectations are. This has been a route for initial expressions of interest for recruitment of citywide groups.
- 2.4 The findings of the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) survey has been shared with the local and strategic groups to obtain their opinions in how we can best improve our tenant satisfaction.

3 **Update on Progress to date**

- 3.1 A model has been developed to show the relationships and reporting structure of the Tenant Involvement Service. (See appendix 1).
- 3.2 The progress and current status of the different groups and forums can be seen below. They are reported from the outer ring inwards according to strategic positioning.
- 3.3 **Strategic Tenant Body** – now called **VITAL** (Voice of Involved Tenants At Leeds). 3 formal meetings have now been held, and draft terms of reference and a workplan developed. Draft terms of reference are attached in appendix 2. VITAL is made up of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of all the citywide groups, two representatives from the Repairs Focus Groups and the Chair of BITMO. This means that all tenants and residents of Leeds are represented at the highest level and there is a clear channel of communication for them to have a voice. VITAL will be launched officially in September 2015. The service recognises the need to invest in the training and development of this group, supporting them to work well together and provide leadership to the tenant involvement agenda. We are investing in the support of an Independent Tenant Advisor to facilitate an away-day during September, which will focus on leadership skills, teamwork and identify group and individual training and development needs.
- 3.4 **Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF)** - Housing Leeds and LTF jointly held a citywide TARA event in June 2015 to promote LTF's new role in the tenant involvement framework, which is made up of the following:

- Providing strategic leadership to Housing Leeds Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs) by sharing good practice, promoting a consistent approach and identifying common/emerging themes across groups via a citywide TARA forum.
- Coordinating awareness campaigns on behalf of tenants e.g. welfare change/fuel poverty.
- Representing views of non-Housing Leeds tenants.

LTF is currently recruiting residents to a new TARA Forum, which will support LTF in working with TARAs and to develop good practice and clear support networks.

3.5 **TARAs – Tenants and Resident’s Groups and Area Representatives** - There are now 86 TARAs operating locally across Housing Leeds, with the creation of 3 new TARAs, and further TARAs are in development. 23 TARAs and 4 groups attended the citywide TARA event in June 2015. Views were collected on how the proposed TARAs Panel could be geographically representative of TARAs, and areas of support that are a priority for groups. The service offer, launched at the June event has now been delivered to all TARAs and Area Reps. This will create a consistent approach to the services and support available to them, but also provide a more consistent approach by the TARA’s themselves, especially with the direction and leadership from LTF.

3.6 **Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) and the Cross City Chairs Group (CCCG)** - At the end of July 2015, 4 months into the financial year, the HAP’s have committed £405,081, or 31% of their £1.32m overall budget on 110 environmental and community related projects. They remain focussed on ensuring the projects they support are value for money and try to manage their budgets to be able to support projects throughout the year.

Whilst year one focused on harmonising bid and HAP processes, year two is now about focussing on other local priorities such as local performance and concerns from STAR, and developing closer working relationships with Community Committees. The CCCG have been encouraging joint funding via the HAPs of citywide bids such as Community Payback or showcasing HAP funded projects for consideration in other areas of the city such as the Parenting program.

The CCCG commissioned the tenant involvement service to produce an Annual Report of HAPs for 14/15 reflecting on the busy year and achievements they had made. (See appendix 3).

3.7 **High Rise Advisory Group** - The High Rise Advisory Group meets regularly to discuss issues affecting tenants in high rise properties, and to develop improvements to services. The group recently met with the Fire Safety Manager to discuss the fire safety booklet for high rise tenants and raise their concerns regarding existing processes.

The group held a citywide forum in June 2015, to provide feedback to tenants on the High Rise Tenants Survey, to outline the High Rise Project, and to involve tenants in identifying the priorities.

3.8 **VOLT – Voice of Leeds Older Tenants** - This strategic older persons group has had 3 meetings, and continues recruitment to ensure wide representation from across the city. The group has elected a chair and is currently developing its work programme for the coming year.

Members represented the group at the 6 more local forums at sheltered schemes to get more local views of tenant priorities. Going forward, forums will be twice a year. Making A Difference meetings are being held at sheltered schemes where there is interest from tenants, and the frequency is determined by the tenants.

- 3.9 **The Equal Access Group** – This strategic group representing tenants with disabilities has now had 1 meeting and has wide representation from tenants of all areas of Leeds, a range of disabilities, carers and mix of tenants who have been involved previously and newly involved tenants.

The initial group held their first meeting in July 2015 and reviewed and discussed tenant priorities highlighted at the Equal Access forum in April 2015. Possible future work plans identified are aids and adaptations, contacting Housing Leeds and disabled parking arrangements.

- 3.10 A significant focus of the Tenant Involvement Service is to improve the engagement and involvement of younger tenants. The Service has started to make connections with Children's Services through the Youth Forums and we are looking to develop different methods and activities using social media to engage younger tenants and working age in ways which suite them.

YAgI – Young Adults Getting Involved - This group, currently has 7 members, and is working on a less formal basis with Housing Leeds to represent tenants aged 16 to 35 and support the service in identifying how best to involve and communicate with young people. The group is growing in confidence, and the experience has proved beneficial in helping tenants to access employment opportunities. Recent meetings that the group have led on include a meeting with the lead officer from the Voice, Influence and Change team to discuss opportunities for involving more young people in communities through the Area Youth Panels, a meeting to discuss improvements to the Housing Leeds website and newsletter, and meeting with Flagship (Foundation) and Archway to promote YAgI and to discuss closer working relationships.

The group is currently focusing on active marketing, to encourage others to get involved, including setting up a YAgI Twitter page, sharing posters with organisations that work with young people, contacting over 4000 council tenants under 35, and supporting International Youth Day in August by attending a Breeze youth event in Beeston.

- 3.11 **Rainbow Roofs** – This group represents the views of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) tenants. It continues to meet monthly and has been supporting Housing Leeds to influence how Leeds Housing works with LGB&T customers to meet their needs. The group have provided training to our sheltered support officers around awareness of LGB&T older people. The group is working to increase awareness and increase its membership. They have been working with Housing Leeds' officers to prepare an information stand at Leeds Pride. They will provide information on the group's projects, how to report hate crime, and other tenant involvement opportunities.

- 3.12 **Leaseholder forum** - A Leaseholder Officer has recently been appointed .We have been liaising with them and researching Leaseholder engagement at other local authorities to identify best practice to ensure future engagement activities are attractive to leaseholders.

- 3.13 **Repairs focus groups** - Both existing groups (South and West) have supported the service in developing the repairs handbook and Recharge Policy, and have received updates on the cyclical painting programme and customer satisfaction with repairs. Future work includes input into the Council's Empty Homes Strategy and voids process, how to increase access rates on gas servicing, and how to increase customer satisfaction with the repairs service.

Recruitment is on-going for the East group. Tenants that have been recruited are invited to the South group meeting to experience the process.

- 3.14 **Tenant Scrutiny Board** - Four new members have joined and attended their first meeting on 1 July 2015. Board Members were advised that from their recent scrutiny of the Annual Home Visit, 8 out of the 10 recommendations were agreed and implemented. Possible topics for future inquiries include:
- Development of an environmental standard and the quality of housing estates.
 - Empty homes and voids
 - Customer satisfaction

- 3.15 **Service Improvement Volunteers (SIVs)** - The Service Improvement Volunteer programme was launched to tenants in March 2015 to support the service in managing service improvements and the Tenant Scrutiny Board in undertaking enquiries. Volunteers are getting involved in Estate Walkabouts, the review of the tenant newsletter, housing website review and will become involved in spot checking the quality of void properties and mystery shopping at housing offices.

3.16 **Key Community Development Outcomes**

The Tenant and Community Involvement Framework has supported the delivery of a number of key community development projects, as outlined below.

- **Community Pay Back** - the 11 Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) have jointly funded, in partnership with West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company Ltd, Housing Services and Localities Teams, a new scheme known as 'Community Payback'. This will carry out Court instructed community service and deliver a range of communal and environmental related work in their local area.
- **Parenting Programme** - 2 projects have now been delivered, in Bramley and Burmantofts, (funded by HAPs) to deliver parenting courses which support tenants in managing behaviour and accessing services available to support them. A third project is planned in Morley North/Rothwell.
- **HUGO** (Help You Get Online) – this project, which is a partnership project with Leeds Federation Housing Association, of two buses equipped with computers and Wi-Fi that tour the city offering computer training to improve people's digital skills, has been honoured with a national TPAS award for work getting customers online. HUGO continues to support new projects, e.g. John O'Gaunts Job Club, Halton Moor Digital T Parties.
- **Young People** - various projects have been delivered to support activities for children and young people in order to build confidence, reduce ASB and support communities, e.g. Sk&safe project in Inner North West to support young people to learn to skate, football clubs, Dance4Tots.
- **Environmental** – various projects to support the community environment, e.g. supporting use of housing land for allotments at Leigh View, Urban Oasis event across the Outer South area.

- **Social Isolation** – projects to reduce isolation, e.g. tea parties in Outer South sheltered schemes, in partnership with ASDA celebrating their 50th Anniversary, supporting the development of a Men’s Group in Armley to improve health and wellbeing and reduce suicide rates.

4 **Communications**

- 4.1 We are currently developing a Housing Leeds Marketing and Communications Strategy, which will outline the service’s overall plans for communication with tenants. A fundamental part of this strategy will be to improve the way that we communicate with young and working age tenants, to put a greater emphasis on digital communications, including the internet, email, social media and texting.
- 4.2 **Housing Website** - Housing Leeds is currently reviewing the Housing pages on the Council’s website to develop a Housing Leeds site which is more accessible to tenants, and provides the types of information that tenants would like to access on line. We aim to go live with the new website during autumn 2015. There is a longer term vision to make the website more interactive, and to provide more local information to tenants about what is happening in their area.
- 4.3 **Tenants Newsletter** – Following reduced tenant satisfaction with the tenants newsletter in the STAR survey, we are currently reviewing the newsletter to consider how effective it is as method of communication. A tenant survey is currently underway and we have contacted other Local Authorities and social housing providers to find out how they manage this communication. We are also working with Service Improvement Volunteers and the YAgi as part of this review.
- 4.4 **In The Loop** - We have recognised that some of our most frequently involved tenants and leaseholders like to receive regular housing update and we now produce In The Loop, a monthly E-Bulletin that is emailed to 400 households.
- 4.5 **Social Media** – Housing Leeds continues to make improvements to its Twitter and Facebook communications, with regular updates to tenants about what is happening in their area. We are also exploring the development of online forums to invite comments from tenants on particular issues.

5 **Performance**

- 5.1 To track the performance the impact of all involvement activity the service is currently working with VITAL to design a performance dashboard, which will summarise who is getting involved in what kind of involvement activity and show which customer groups are over or under-represented. This will help the service, and VITAL, understand which parts of the framework are most effective and how the framework, in consultation with VITAL, can adapt to changing needs. Since April 2015 the involvement service has been recording its activity in specialist involvement software. This allows for better management and analysis of the work the service undertakes.

Between April and the end of July 2015, 233 individuals have in some way been actively involved within the formal tenant involvement framework. This includes 197 tenants (48 of whom are sheltered), 28 private residents and 6 leaseholders. Many more tenants will have participated in local or informal activity that is supported by the team or led on by local tenants and residents associations.

The gender and disability profile of 'involved' tenants is broadly in line with the overall tenant profile, with differences in BME engagement and in some age groups, most notably 25-34 year olds who are most under-represented.

6 Corporate Considerations

6.1 Consultation and Engagement

6.2 Over the past few months, further forums supporting high rise, sheltered and access have taken place. These have gained tenant views on key themes that need to be addressed. Housing Leeds also delivered in partnership with LTF, the first citywide TARA forum; gaining their views on citywide TARA representation.

6.3 Tenants who have already being recruited to specific groups are now working with Housing Leeds officers to undertake further recruitment to the different groups. Tenants have recently assisted in recruiting to VOLT.

7 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

7.1 A Theology Student from Leeds University is joining us in September 15 to carry out a research project around the religion or belief of LCC tenants. We have asked that they undertake analysis on satisfaction/dissatisfaction of young tenants in relation to faith or belief and also what faith support is available for our young tenants.

7.2 Housing Leeds has worked with the Corporate E&D team to identify and propose housing E&D priorities for 2015 to 2019. Discussions are on-going with other LCC departments to agree citywide equality priorities.

8 Council policies and City Priorities

8.1 The service's tenant involvement activity contributes towards the delivery of the Best Council plan priorities of supporting communities and tackling poverty and becoming and more efficient and enterprising council.

8.2 The service helps to support the Best City for Communities priority to increase the sense of belonging that builds cohesive and harmonious communities.

9 Resources and value for money

9.1 The total HAP commitment of £405,081 on 110 projects has been enhanced by a further £186,583 of funding contributions from other sources, e.g. community committee funding. This has helped the HAPs to support a greater number of projects.

9.2 Now that the Tenant Involvement Framework is fully developed, Housing Leeds will be working with VITAL during 2015/16 to consider the costs and benefits of each of the areas of tenant involvement with consideration to the social return on the investment, in order to identify the most effective forms of tenant involvement and community development.

10 **Legal Implications**

- 10.1 The involvement framework 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'.

11 **Risk Management**

- 11.1 There are a number of risks identified linked to the Tenant and Community Involvement Framework. These are as follows:
- That the newly implemented Tenant Involvement Framework does not deliver fully integrated and effective tenant involvement or improvements for tenants and communities.
 - That the new Strategic Tenant Body- VITAL, does not deliver the desired outcomes or perform as expected.
 - That future STAR surveys do not show the desired outcome of increased tenant satisfaction.
- 11.2 These risks will be managed by Housing Leeds, working closely with VITAL. Issues with the effectiveness of the tenant involvement framework will be reported as part of regular updates to Housing Advisory Board.

12 **Conclusions**

- 12.1 The Tenant Involvement Framework is now becoming embedded within Housing Leeds, and tenants are now in a stronger position to influence and support service improvements for tenants and to make a real difference to local communities.
- 12.2 A priority for the coming year is to strengthen relationships within the framework, and to ensure that tenants are supported to work with services to make service improvements.

13 **Recommendations**

That the Housing Advisory Board:

- Recognises the new city wide and strategic groups
- Supports the overall approach and direction of travel to create an engaged and representative tenant base within Leeds.

14 **Background documents**

- 14.1 Appendix 1: STB/VITAL Map
- 14.2 Appendix 2: Draft STB T.O.R
- 14.3 Appendix 3: CCCG Annual Report

