

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES

STRATEGIC BOARD

REPORT OF HEAD OF AREA OPERATIONS - SOUTH

17 MAY 2007

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES CITYWIDE COMPACT 2007-2010

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Compact for 2007-2010 is a new and revised formal agreement between Nottingham City Council, the Council's tenants and leaseholders, and Nottingham City Homes. It sets out our agreed vision, aims and objectives for involving tenants and leaseholders on all aspects of their housing service.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Strategic Board is asked to:
- Agree the Compact 2007-2010; and
 - Note the promotional launch of the Compact.

3 REPORT

- 3.1 From April 2000 every council and ALMO was expected to have a signed formal agreement with its tenants on how tenants are involved in local decisions relating to their homes. The governments aim is to improve local services, increase local democracy, strengthen and sustain local communities, help tenants to decide how they wish to be involved in influencing and shaping decisions taken by their council on housing issues, and in a way which meets needs and priorities. The **Tenant Compacts** are designed to encourage local and innovative approaches to tenant participation and allow for differing circumstances and starting points for tenants and councils across the country.
- 3.2 Compacts are a tool to help ensure that councils and ALMOs become more efficient, transparent and accountable so that people know who exactly will be responsible for decisions and that tenants are actively involved in helping councils and ALMOs:
- reach decisions
 - implement best value by enabling tenants to make an informed view on their housing services
 - in planning, improving services, monitoring and reporting on performance, and identifying and taking remedial actions
 - identifying issues of concern and ways of improving their quality of life as part of a wider strategy to tackle poor neighbourhoods.
- 3.3 Compacts are also designed to ensure that tenants have the support and information they need to participate effectively and that tenants' groups

meet reasonable criteria for formal recognition. Councils and ALMOs are required to monitor and assess their performance on compacts on a consistent and regular basis. The Council/ALMOs performance in delivering what is agreed in the compact is scrutinised independently - along with performance across other aspects of housing. This scrutiny is carried out through the Best Value regime and also by the Audit Commission.

- 3.4 The new and revised Compact for Nottingham's council tenants and leaseholders has been developed with input from over 150+ staff, wide consultation with tenants and leaseholders and also opportunities for former Operational Board and our Strategic Board members to get involved. An intensive programme of working groups has been established, consisting of tenants and managers, to discuss the Compact and these have also been used to agree the remit of the new tenant involvement structure and roles of the Area Panels and Forums which will then underpin the progress and performance monitoring of the Compact action plan. All feedback received has been collated, recorded and used to update the Compact and inform the terms of reference for the tenant involvement structure.
- 3.5 NCH's vision is for tenants and leaseholders to work in partnership with NCH and NCC to deliver good quality, customer focussed services where tenants and leaseholders are fully involved in decision-making and the management and maintenance of their homes and the surrounding environment to deliver more sustainable communities and places people are proud to live in.
- 3.6 The key objectives of the Compact are to:
- develop effective partnership working of tenants and leaseholders, NCC and staff of NCH;
 - ensure that all tenants and leaseholders have a say in issues which affect their homes, the surrounding environment and their community;
 - to deliver tangible results that reflect the feedback, views and priorities of tenants;
 - provide the widest possible range of opportunities to enable as many tenants and leaseholders as possible to get involved in the issues that affect them.
- 3.7 The Audit Commission Inspection identified that tenant participation was at a very low level of development at NCH including satisfaction for opportunities to get involved, the range of involvement opportunities needing development, a need for tenant involvement in performance monitoring, no clarity about the role and work of the Tenant and Resident Associations, Area Panels or Forums, generally no action taken to reach 'hard to reach groups' and no consistent or quality training for residents.
- 3.8 Many Tenant Compacts look great on paper and the previous Citywide Compact also presented a reasonable model of agreement however NCH was exposed to criticism of how it was implementing and

monitoring its content, and, how effectively NCC were signed up to the agreement. The new arrangements being recommended will ensure that the Compact is a working management tool agreed by all parties and actively monitored and progressed by all levels of management at NCH with clear performance reporting to the revised tenant involvement framework, including a direct and accountable link to Strategic Board. All management tiers are currently involved in the process of developing the Compact with tenants ensuring that individual responsibilities are specific, recognised and measured accordingly. The new Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Manager is due to start at NCH on 4 June 2007 and this will be a key area of priority. The Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team restructure will also ensure that tenant participation development is underpinned and given greater priority.

- 3.9 Following Board approval, NCH will formally launch the tripartite agreement in partnership with tenants, leaseholders and NCC through a promotional campaign aimed at increasing the profile of this work and the aspirations it has to achieve increased tenant involvement. It is intended that the Compact will be signed during National Housing Week.

4 OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 None. The Audit Commission identified significant weaknesses and provided wide ranging recommendations in the way NCH can work better with its tenants. The HouseMark/Pinnacle Review of tenant participation at NCH suggested radical changes to the current ways of working, including a new framework for involvement and provided a Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy as a platform from which to accelerate, develop and improve tenant involvement opportunities.
- 4.2 The revised Tenants Compact now provides a springboard for tenants to get directly involved in the range of housing services that NCH delivers.

5 FINANCIAL & RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The current tenant involvement budget takes account of publications and events that will be required to support the launch of the Compact and then ongoing promotion aimed at increasing tenant involvement at NCH. We will also be carrying out an intensive staff and resident training programme to support the capacity building that is needed at NCH.
- 5.2 There is a risk that the Compact will become a “looks good on paper” exercise unless it is properly owned by staff, regularly monitored, is supported by an action plan and that NCC formally agree its vision, objectives and meet their respective targets. If this does not happen then the culture change needed at NCH to harness more tenant involvement by all staff will not be embedded and we run the risk of the Audit Commission again identifying that the weaknesses outweigh the strengths. A suite of performance measures will be introduced to ensure we monitor progress against the Compact Action Plan and track the impact and success of the new ways of working.

- 5.3 A full Tenants Compact will be published supported by a Summary document. This will be funded from within existing budgets. The Compact will be professionally published including Summary versions being available in other languages on request and taking value for money considerations into account.
- 5.4 The Compact that has been developed has been benchmarked against other 3 star performing ALMOs to ensure that we have fully explored best practice in the sector – this being a key requirement of the Audit Commission. The formal agreement has, however, been tailored in response to consultation with stakeholders to suit what our tenants and leaseholders in Nottingham want and expect to see as improvements to the services they receive and how they are involved in the future.

6 IMPLICATIONS FOR NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy and Compact complement the strategic vision of NCH.

7 VALUE FOR MONEY & EFFICIENCY ISSUES

- 7.1 The Compact will ensure that real tenant involvement happens at grass root and front line service level. Accountability will be more localised with standards and services improving as a result.

8 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 NCH's aim is to have a housing service where all tenants and leaseholders, irrespective of race, religion, culture, nationality, ethnic background, colour, disability, gender, sexuality, age, literacy or income level, have meaningful opportunities to be involved as respected partners in influencing, developing and delivering all services in their local areas and across Nottingham.

9 BACKGROUND MATERIAL AND PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

- 9.1 Tenants Compact 2007-2010
Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy
ODPM's National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts
ODPM's Developing Good Practice in Tenant Participation

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