

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES

REPORT OF TENANT & LEASEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT MANAGER

BOARD
20 SEPTEMBER 2007

PROGRESS ON TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This Report seeks to inform Board Members on the progress to date of establishing effective tenant and leaseholder involvement within the Company
- 1.2 The Report also provides an update on the progress that has been made in establishing the for and groups as set out in the Tenant Participation Framework.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board note the progress made.

3 REPORT

3.1 Menu of Involvement

The aims and objectives of the Compact will be met through a “Menu of Involvement” with tenants and leaseholders so that there is a wide range of opportunities to get involved across all areas of the Housing Services. NCH wants to ensure all current and prospective tenants and leaseholders have as many opportunities as possible both formal and informal for getting involved. The “Getting Involved” leaflet which shows the “Menu of Involvement” has been reviewed to align with the Tenant and Leaseholder Participation Compact (see Appendix 1 for Resident Consultation Structure).

3.2 Tenant Participation for Staff

- 3.2.1 NCH takes tenant participation very seriously and it is seen as being the responsibility of all employees. It is therefore proposed that tenant participation will be included in every NCH job description. This will ensure that all members of staff have a key role in improving and promoting customer involvement with a customer first approach at the grassroots level.
- 3.2.2 The Customer Care Culture Change Development Programme will support the culture change needed so that frontline employees understand their role in delivering and increasing tenant participation and involvement.

- 3.2.3 The interim restructure supports an increased focus on tenant participation by all frontline officers, not just Tenant and Resident Officers. The weekly team briefings will include a tenant participation focus as a standing item. This will ensure that there is feedback through frontline staff from tenants and also to ensure staff are kept up to date on new tenant participation initiatives.
- 3.2.4 With the new Tenant and Leaseholder Partnership Manager now in post the Company is developing a wide range of innovative ways in which we can consult and involve all of our tenants. We are currently exploring opportunities to link involvement and the Respect Agenda and Young People into the weeks of action we are undertaking to improve our estates. We are developing our current role in schools and are looking to strengthen existing relationships with neighbourhood management. We are aiming to be more proactive within our neighbourhoods, by having more locally based promotional events.
- 3.2.5 An area of development for the Service will be to improve and expand the quality of the literature and promotional products we currently use.
- 3.2.6 To support these developments and the work of the TRAs we are exploring the available funding opportunities which are available to support work within communities. We have access to a 'fund finder' website and will be providing training to our tenants on how they can access this website and obtain support to complete funding applications.

3.3 Area Panels

- 3.3.1 Area Panels have now commenced and are in varying degrees of development. Area Housing Managers are ensuring that they are constituted with terms of reference and codes of conduct in place. Standard agenda items will cover: estate inspections, performance in the local area, success stories, customer care, value for money, local area round up, feedback from Board, the Tenants and Leaseholders Congress, the Forums and Area Committees.
- 3.3.2 Area Panels will have a direct link into the Board as part of the new framework and will be given authority to make decisions about the management of any area-based budgets as delegated to the Panels by the Board. This will include being responsible for deciding spending priorities within any criteria set by the Board and managing and monitoring such spending.
- 3.3.3 Support to Area Panels will be provided by Technical Services, the local Councillor, the police, as well as representation from NCC, who will discuss the Area Capital Fund available for the Panel to submit bids for. Relationships and working arrangements with these other providers is being developed and some areas already have good examples of strong working relationships with other partners and agencies already.
- 3.3.4 It is agreed that a representative from an Area Panel will attend the Area Committee meetings and this will ensure that a formal arrangement and recognised representation exists between NCH and NCC.

3.3.5 A further role for the Area Panels will be to develop and establish Local Area Compacts.

3.4 Forums

3.4.1 The majority of the Forums have held their first round of meetings. These are facilitated by Heads of Service. Service Managers are asked to attend for specific items to report in more detail as and when required. The Forums will also be fully constituted with terms of reference and codes of conduct. The only Forum which has not yet met under the new framework is the Supported Housing Forum but work is in progress to attract customers from supported housing so that we can ensure that our more vulnerable customers have the ability and are able to access us to influence and scrutinise services. Forum meetings are held bi-monthly.

3.4.2 Repairs Forum

At their first meeting, the mock inspection was discussed and the Forum looked at the new void standard, the results of the survey that had been undertaken of the call centre and how the level of efficiency in which the reporting of repairs are dealt with. This Forum will be providing representatives to attend the monthly Decent Homes sub group. There was discussion about posters being displayed on the Company vans publicising rent payment and the help that is available. Members of the Forum are on the Repairs Scrutiny Panel and have been meeting monthly to oversee the process of Tendering the Repairs Contract and setting the PIs, which the new Contract will be expected to achieve. The Chair is to be elected at the next meeting.

3.4.3 Older Persons Forum

Forum membership will be 55+. New chair to be elected at the next meeting once nominations received. Nottingham Older Persons Strategy was discussed and the forum is to be involved in the consultation about the strategy. Discussion took place about how to increase the membership of the Forum.

3.4.4 Leaseholders Forum

Since the NCH Interim Structure was set up, the Leaseholder Forum has been working to agree a vision for the service, scrutinising the type of questions to be asked in the forthcoming survey of all leaseholders, and getting to know the members of the new leaseholder team. The Forum has given leaseholders a genuine opportunity to indicate what their priorities for improvement are, how they want us to communicate with them in future, and what shape this consultation will take. The forum has just been newly constituted, with successful re-elections for the Chair and Vice Chair. It is envisaged that in future, the forum will go on to provide useful comment and scrutiny on the services that they receive, and to give leaseholders the opportunity to influence decisions about these services.

3.4.5 Tenancy and Estate Management Forum

A Chair and Vice Chair have been elected. The Forum was advised about the restructure of Housing Operations and there was a presentation about the proposed new tenancy agreement. The key activities for the Forum were discussed and these were distributed to the members of the Forum. The Forum will be receiving a full report about the recent estate inspections and weeks of action. A forward plan is to be drafted for the Forum to discuss and agree at the next meeting which will include: ASB, estate inspections, week of action report and progress, performance information on voids and progress on targets. Two subgroups of the Tenancy and Estate Management Forum are the Rent Panel and the ASB group.

3.4.6 BME Forum

The Forum has met twice since the launch of the new Compact. The group has received updates on the Compact and Inspection timetable, has been drawing up its action plan for next 12 months, and has called officers in to discuss scrutiny and other training for the group. The Forum's priorities in the next year will be a timetable of scrutiny and inviting key stakeholders to Forum meetings, training, and a reminiscence project involving young and old alike.

3.5 Tenants and Leaseholders Congress

3.5.1 The Tenant and Leaseholder Congress have their first meeting arranged for 13th September and will be discussing items including:

- Establishing a protocol for the election the Chair and Vice Chair
- Establishing the terms of reference, code of conduct and constitution for the Congress
- Discussing the Tenants Conference and setting up an events group to organise it, working in conjunction with the Tenant and Resident Officers who will be involved in facilitating workshops alongside tenants at the conference.
- The establishment of the Compact Review Group who will review and monitor the action plan for the Compact initially in December six months after the launch.
- Feedback from Area Panels and Forums

3.6 Equality Monitoring

3.6.1 An equality monitoring exercise is currently being undertaken with all tenants and residents associations, the area panels, forums and the TLC to establish what the levels of representation are in the current resident involvement structure. The results from this will be known mid October and targets and actions will then be set accordingly.

3.7 Training

3.7.1 There is a training skills audit taking place during September of all of the

tenants and leaseholders involved in the tenant participation structure. This will identify the training requirements for tenant and leaseholder representatives. A business case is being prepared to deliver a programme of training for tenants and leaseholders with specialist training packages tailored to specific needs. Requests for training on IT and scrutiny have already been received by some of the tenant representatives. Other identified training needs are accredited training for Members of the Forums, particularly the Young Peoples' Group which is in development. Accrediting of courses is an important way to incentivise participation. It helps to raise standards of educational attainment and opens up potential employment and further education opportunities for tenants.

- 3.7.2 We are in the process of developing a Young Peoples' Forum. We intend to use existing local mechanisms in place to stimulate interest, including services provided by NCC such as the Youth Parliament. A meeting has been arranged in conjunction with Tuntum Housing Association to discuss the most appropriate way of setting up and encouraging attendance for a Young Persons' Group. The aim is to build the confidence and capacity of young people to become involved and be represented within all the mainstream NCH arrangements for tenant and leaseholder consultation and involvement, including the Area Panels and the Tenants and Leaseholders Congress.

The launch of the "Homes 4 Us" disability focus group is taking place at an event in September. This event will launch a focus group that will examine how Nottingham City Homes can improve its service to disabled customers and carers, and get more disabled people involved in the work of Nottingham City Homes. The group will be looking at the best ways to make NCH services more accessible for disabled tenants and leaseholders and carers, ensuring that the information NCH sends to its customers meets the needs of disabled tenants and leaseholders and looking at ways NCH can improve its repairs and adaptations services.

3.8 Tenants Newsletter

- 3.8.1 The Marketing team will be promoting the Editorial Board in the newsletter to tenants and on the website as increased membership for this Board is being sought. Training will be provided for all members of the Editorial Board

3.9 The Role of the Tenant and Residents Officers

- 3.9.1 The role of the tenants and residents officer is being reviewed and we are considering the added value that specialist roles could bring in terms of posts dedicated to the RESPECT agenda, young people, older people, external bid funding etc. We currently have 9 Tenant and Resident Officer positions within the establishment and if we agree to introduce specialist roles for some of those positions then training will be provided to enable officers to carry out their specific role. Currently 6 of the TROs are studying for the CIH Level 3 Certificate in Housing (Tenant Participation). The course will be completed in March 2008.

3.9.2 The TROs are involved in promoting and raising awareness about tenant participation through Estate Action Days, Weeks of Action and LAG events – next event is for Aspley on 29th September 2007, where there will be stands for tenant participation and Tenant Inspectors

3.10 Tenant Management Organisation (TMO)

3.10.1 The Victoria Tenants and Residents Association (VICTRA) have expressed an interest in exercising their right to develop as a Tenant Management Organisation. NCH and NCC are supporting the tenants in a funding application to the housing Corporation for COMPAS@TPAS to undertake an Option Study Process.

3.10.2 The Options Study is a detailed examination of the options available to tenants for tenant management. It also provides an opportunity to engage the wider community stakeholders in assessing the way forward. It is funded through central government Section 16 Tenant Empowerment Grant (administered by the Housing Corporation) and has an estate based emphasis. The study is completed over 6-9 months and an action plan will be produced at the end of the study which will show the chosen option, how this will be implemented, by whom and how it will be resourced, together with the timescale for implementation.

4 FINANCIAL & RISK IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Grant funding is available to support the process of the Option Study

4.2 If the TMO application was successful, management fees currently paid to NCH would need to be paid to the TMO. The level of fee would depend on the extent of responsibility taken on by the TMO.

4.3 A Business Development bid for £88k is currently being compiled for training and development for tenants, leaseholders and staff. Tenant Participation is an integral part of the Company's business and it is important that tenants, leaseholders and staff receive appropriate training in order that they can contribute efficiently and effectively to the decision making process.

5 IMPLICATIONS FOR NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES OBJECTIVES

5.1 Nottingham City Homes have stated in the Tenant and Leaseholder Participation Compact that they will: "support tenants and leaseholders who wish to manage themselves either wholly through a Tenant Management Organisation or partly through Local Management Agreements

6 VALUE FOR MONEY AND EFFICIENCY ISSUES

6.1 The benefits and outcomes assessed against the aims and objectives in the Tenant and Leaseholder Participation Compact will be reported annually to the Board

6.2 Value for money of different approaches to involvement will be monitored and evaluated by the Tenants and Leaseholders Congress

7 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Monitoring of the implementation of the equalities and diversity policy to measure the levels of input and involvement from under-represented sections of the community will be reported quarterly to Area Panels, the Forums, the TLC and the Board.

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

Tenant and Leaseholder Participation Compact

CONTACT OFFICERS: Kim McMullen
Kim.mcmullen@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk
Tel: 915 7366

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