



AGENDA ITEM: 8

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	18th July 2012
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Progress Report on Review of Tenant & Leaseholder Committee and the Wider Tenant Involvement Arrangements and Tenant Involvement Strategy (combined report)
Contact:	Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing Landlord Carolyn Leech, Team Leader, Policy and Participation
Purpose of report:	The purpose of this report is to inform the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the work that has been undertaken as part of the TLC review and developing the Tenant Involvement Strategy.
Recommendations	It is requested that the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 1) Review progress to date 2) Review the draft Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15
Corporate objectives:	Effective and empowered tenant involvement supports the Council's corporate objectives and contributes to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Community capacity • Economic development and regeneration • Resources and value for money • Affordable Housing • Enhancing our profile and reputation
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> There will be a need to ensure that those tenants and leaseholders involved at the higher levels of involvement such as tenant scrutiny are fully trained and supported with this; it

Value For Money Implications'	<p>will therefore be necessary to ensure that part of the existing budget be assigned for this.</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u> It is anticipated that with tenant and leaseholder involvement in scrutiny, service reviews and developing or reviewing service level agreements, and helping to target expenditure against tenant and leaseholder priorities will enable us to deliver value for money for our tenants and leaseholders, as well as give higher levels of customer satisfaction.</p>
Risk Implications	<p>Developing and delivering a robust and focused tenant involvement structure and strategy, with real involvement at a grass roots level will build on the reputation and image of Dacorum Borough Council Housing Landlord Service, and will ultimately result in improvements in tenant and leaseholder's priority areas.</p> <p>Failure to develop tenant scrutiny will result in us failing to comply with our regulatory requirements. This could be seen as a detrimental failing and could result in the Homes and Communities Agency bringing penalties against us.</p>
Equalities Implications	The Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15 seeks to break down the barriers to involvement and create inclusive opportunities for all to be involved.
Health And Safety Implications	There are no health and safety implications identified.
Consultees:	Members of the Tenants and Leaseholder Committee, Chair and Vice Chair of the TLC, Chair of MFG and the two co-optee members of HCOSC.
Background papers:	<p>Suggested reading to support this report includes:</p> <p>Tenant Scrutiny: now and in the future http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Policy%20free%20download%20pdfs/Tenant%20Scrutiny%20-%208-Nov-2011-lowres.pdf</p> <p>TSA Consultation paper on regulatory reform http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org/server/show/ConWebDoc.21636</p> <p>Value for Money & Tenant Involvement - Marianne Hood OBE http://www.housemark.co.uk/hmresour.nsf/lookup/VFMandTenantInvolvement.pdf/\$File/VFMandTenantInvolvement.pdf</p> <p>Every Tenant Matters – Professor Martin Cave http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/320365.pdf</p>

1. Background

A report was presented to Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 21st March 2012 that detailed a list of recommendations to strengthen the role of the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee as well as develop the Tenant Involvement Structure.

2. The Tenant and Leaseholder Committee Review

As a result of the work we have done with the working group we have:

- Agreed the new terms of reference, code of conduct and breach procedure with the TLC
- Drawn up draft terms of reference for the Executive Panel
- Have researched Tenant Scrutiny Panels and have a draft terms of reference
- Written a draft Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15

Plus we have committed as a result of the work with the working group to create a Housing Management Sub Committee. This will aid the delivery of service improvements in this area of the Housing Landlord Service.

We have also looked at the terms of reference for the Maintenance Focus Group as it was felt by the working group that the group needed to have a clearer direction and remit to help support improvements in the Property and Place section.

A status report showing the seven recommendations made in the March report is attached at appendix 1.

4. Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15

Work has also been undertaken with tenants and leaseholders to create the Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15. The Strategy will be our primary action plan for developing tenant involvement in partnership with the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee. The draft Strategy is attached at appendix 2.

5. Approval and monitoring

Following support from the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15 on receipt of an Executive Decision will be published and will become our primary action plan.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Committee will have responsibility for monitoring the progress against the action plan. An update on the Strategy will be published in News and Views on a quarterly basis following the launch.

A report will be submitted on an annual basis to Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to update them on the progress of the plan and the impact that increased tenant involvement has made on the Housing Service.

By involving the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee we will ensure a truly joined up approach to tenant involvement and empowerment which is supporting both the needs and wants of tenants and leaseholders as well as the Council.

Appendix 1

Review of Tenant and Leaseholder Committee

Update on recommendations made in the report to Housing Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21st March 2012.

Recommendation	Target Date	Comments	Status
1. The Role of the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee become a strategic role	End May 2012	A working group consisting of the Chair and Vice Chair TLC, Chair MFG and Scrutiny co-optees have worked with staff	Completed
2. The Tenant and Leaseholder Committee role be clarified to ensure clear area's of responsibility	End May 2012	to create an amended terms of reference, code of conduct and breach procedure to reflect the recommendations. These were presented to the TLC on the 19 th June following the postponement of the May meeting. Slippage due to the meeting change, however the TLC agreed the new terms of reference etc at this meeting and they will be signing up to these on the 09.07.12.	Completed
3. The size of the Committee is to reduce	No target	It was agreed with the working group and TLC that this would be a natural progression therefore members will not be recruited should anyone leave the committee. Once numbers go below 15 then recruitment will re-commence.	Completed
4. To introduce a Tenant Scrutiny Panel as per regulatory requirements	End Jan 2013	Research has been done on Tenant Scrutiny Panels. Draft terms of reference and role profile in development. Tenant Scrutiny Framework and recruitment to be launched at the tenants conference	On target
5. Introduce an Executive Panel	End May 2012	Terms of reference have been developed with working group. Taking to TLC for approval on 9 th July 2012, once agreed Panel will be "launched". Slight slippage	Out of target by due to complete early July 2012

		due to getting the role right to ensure that achieves tenants/leaseholders aims and addresses their concerns	
6. To remove the need for a Governance Sub Committee	Linked to setting up Exec Panel	Once the Executive Panel terms of reference have been agreed, the GSC will be replaced. A letter is to go out to those that were involved in the GSC thanking them for the support etc	Linked to 5
7. A tenant involvement strategy to be developed covering the next three years, 2012-15 in partnership with the TLC	End June 2012	Slight slippage due to staffing issues. On target to complete for end of July 2012, a strategy has been developed with TLC following kick start meetings to assist with the development of tenant involvement over the next three years.	Out of target but due to complete end July 2012

Additional objectives in this project that form part of the proposed Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15

- Lower level committees – these have been discussed with the working group and in addition to the Maintenance Focus Group and Tenant Scrutiny Panel a committee to support the Housing Management part of the Housing Landlord Service is to be set up. The terms of reference are to be agreed with the TLC on 9th July 2012, and then recruitment can commence.
- Local Area Panels – following discussions with the working group we will undertake a consultation with tenants at the upcoming Tenant and Leaseholder Conference.

Following its approval the Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15 will be our primary action plan for developing tenant involvement in partnership with the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee.

Appendix 2

Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-2015 ~ Together We Can

Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Landlord Service Vision

Our vision is to improve the quality of housing service available to all tenants. By involving tenants to take a strategic role in the scrutiny and monitoring of services, we will be empowering tenants to make recommendations for improvements. Tenants will also actively challenge the service on the delivery of these improvements for all. The Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15 supports achieving this vision.

Context

Tenant Involvement is a rapidly developing area; with the changes to legislation following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 it is even more important to involve tenants in the strategic management of housing services.

With the Localism Act 2011 comes the abolition of the Tenant Services Authority the regulator for the regulatory framework. As a result tenants will take on this role and it is therefore essential that our Involvement Structure ensures tenants are at the heart of our organisation. Not only to act as drivers for change, but to help set the Vision for the service. Empowered tenants will work with staff to help deliver the Strategic part of the business by way of governance and challenge.

TPAS quotes *"Everyone knows that involving residents in service development, delivery and improvement is a sound proposition. It makes you more approachable. More accountable. More attuned to residents' views – resulting in solid business decisions and increased efficiency."*

Leaseholders are also a key stakeholder in the Housing Service and those residing in Dacorum Borough Council blocks are also encouraged to play an active part in this Strategy.

The Tenant Involvement Strategy replaces the more traditional Tenant Compacts and will be a live document and it aims:

- To provide a range of flexible opportunities for tenants to get involved
- To assist tenants to truly scrutinise and monitor the service
- To ensure that tenants have a voice that is heard and responded to
- To provide a dedicated team to support and enable effective tenant involvement
- To remove barriers to enable everyone to get involved in the Housing Service
- To be transparent, open and honest
- To measure and report the effectiveness of tenant involvement
- To maximise the impact of tenant involvement activities and ensure value for money

The Strategy incorporates an action plan that covers the three year period of 2012-15. Progress against delivery of the plan will be reported to the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee who will represent tenants and leaseholders across the borough in respect of the Strategy.

The Housing Service has an annual service plan that has been developed with tenants and the strategy links to the service plan as follows:

- Service Objective one – To involve tenants effectively to make sure tenants and leaseholders monitor, challenge, shape and help us to provide an excellent service
- Service objective two – To give the tenants and leaseholders the best value for their rent and service charges
- Service Objective eight – To make all areas of our service provide excellent customer service
- Service Objective ten – To produce a plan for communicating positive messages to tenants and leaseholders, councillors, residents and the housing industry
- Service Objective eleven – Develop a positive “can do” staff culture

Local Offers

Local Offers whilst being a regulatory requirement do reflect the priorities of tenants across the borough. We currently have four local offers around litter, parking, the standard of repairs and involving children and young people. The Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-12 will help to support the delivery of these offers by empowering tenants to get involved at a local level to tackle the priorities in their area.

STAR Survey

The recent Survey of Tenants and Residents has given us a good understanding of areas for improvement by the Housing Service and these are reflected in the Strategy. In particular more work will be done around creating local level involvement and leaseholder involvement to increase satisfaction with local services.

Objectives of the Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15

Our overall objective in addition to the service plan is to ensure that we have a diverse, inclusive and flexible involvement structure that puts tenants at the heart of the organisation, giving them an active voice and empowering them to make a difference.

In order to do this we will:

- Introduce a range of flexible ways to get involved with the housing service
- Increase the number of tenants that we have involved with the housing service, focussing on those groups that are currently under-represented
- Develop Tenant Scrutiny to give tenants an active voice in scrutinising and challenging areas of poor performance and making recommendations for improvements

- Strengthen links with the wider Council Scrutiny methods
- Involve tenants in the setting of Service Plan objectives to ensure that the service is focused on their priorities

Measuring Success

It is essential that the Tenant Involvement Strategy is reviewed regularly to ensure that improvements remain on track and also to ensure that we account for any further changes in legislation or regulation.

In order to do this we will:

- Report the progress of the plan to the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee on a six monthly basis
- Publish the successes of the plan via News and Views to the wider tenant body
- Establish a training package for involved tenants to enable empowerment

In order to fully understand the impact of tenant involvement we also propose to:

- Develop and implement a value for money index
- Assess tenant satisfaction of activities
- Develop and publish an Impact Assessment of main tenant involvement activities

The National Tenant Organisations Accreditation

Within the 3 year plan, we aim to gain National Tenant Organisations (NTO) approved Accreditation (NTOapproved™). This accreditation has been developed to aid organisations in assessing themselves internally but it can also be externally accredited. The assessment is straightforward and is non prescriptive about how tenant panels are set up, allowing us, the Housing Landlord service to set up a panel that suits both the tenants and the landlords needs and aspirations.

The areas of focus for the accreditation are:

1. Co-regulation
2. Tenant leadership
3. Access to all and fairness
4. Functioning Structures and adequate support

The assessment is undertaken by the following methods:

1. Desk top review
2. Tenant Panel meeting
3. Staff Group meeting

The action plan attached to the strategy clearly outlines where and how we will be evidencing our journey to gaining this accreditation.

How will we know the Strategy has been a success?

One of the key measures of success for the strategy will be the NTO accreditation that we will work to achieve over the next three years. In addition to that the following will have been achieved:

End of year 1

At the end of year one, we will have put in place a new tenant involvement structure that will have increased the overall percentage of tenants involved in the service by a minimum 2.5%. This will be achieved by:

- Recruiting more tenants to be involved in committees/local area panels/focus groups etc.
- The Tenant and Leaseholder Committee will be re-established as a strategic group working with the Council to ensure that tenant priorities and expectations of the service are met and/or exceeded. Where this is not possible the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee will ensure that tenants are advised why.
- Tenant Involvement objectives will have been set as part of the staff appraisal process to increase the awareness of tenant involvement and help generate more involvement opportunities within the community.
- The Tenant Scrutiny Framework will have been launched and panel members will have been recruited. This will put us in a strong position to enable tenants to challenge and help shape the services they receive.
- Two joint training sessions will have been held; this will help to create a team working environment between tenants and staff.
- Work will have been completed with Communications to Plain English all publications; this will help to ensure that all messages are communicated clearly to all.

End of Year 2

At the End of year two, we will have strengthened tenant involvement further by introducing:

- An editorial panel will be in place made up of tenants and staff; this will ensure that errors are not made and that information is being communicated in the right way for the audience.
- A process of promoting tenant involvement at sign up of a new tenancy will have been devised; this will let tenants know immediately how they can get involved and make a difference in their housing service.
- A dedicated resource for the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee; this will free up staff time to work on bigger projects and will also ensure consistency and adequate regular support for the Committee as they continue to develop.

- A budget to create a local resource centre; this will enable more tenants to have access to the internet to help support them in their day to day lives. It is hoped that the resource centre could offer training to increase IT skills.
- Devolved budgets to local level via local area panels so that tenants can identify priorities in their local area and act on them. This will empower tenants to make a real difference in their local community.
- An annual report process so that the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee can submit a report to the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee; this will ensure links with the wider Council and will help to promote the work being done by tenants to improve services.

End of Year 3

At the end of year three, we will have increased the percentage of actively involved tenants by 5% following the introduction of:

- A flexible menu of involvement opportunities, offering something for everyone with varying levels of commitment.
- More electronic methods of involvement to make participating more readily available to all.
- Tenant Associations in high rise flats and sheltered accommodation to help tackle issues specific to those client groups.
- Neighbourhood Agreements via local area panels to ensure local issues such as parking, litter and anti-social behaviour are tackled at a local level with more specific remedies for the area in question.

At the end of the three years the Strategy will have enabled us to achieve a tenant focussed housing landlord service. Tenants will be involved in setting the Strategic direction of the service, and ensuring that priorities are delivered on. More tenants will be involved across the board, particularly at a local level. This will ensure that issues are tackled at a local level, to create a more tailored service for all.

Equality and Diversity

The introduction of more flexible tailored methods of involvement will create an opportunity for everyone to get involved in the Housing Service regardless of differing needs and capabilities.

We recognise the valuable contribution that all of our tenants and leaseholders can make and we will ensure that there is an option available to everyone to be involved, in way that suits them, regardless of race, religion, gender, age, disability, how much time they have or whether they can get to Civic Centre etc.

Our Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15 aims to open up tenant involvement to all tenants and leaseholders and remove any barriers to involvement; ensuring that our Tenants are at the heart of the business setting the vision for the future.

Action Plan to achieve our objectives

Link to NTO	Objective	Reference	Who?	How?	By when?	Administrative or Impact	Hyperlink to evidence
	Year 1						
A, B, C & D	Establish new involvement structure – including committees, scrutiny, local panels, tenant associations and street champions in partnership with resident services					A	
A & B	Establish aspirations of the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee to improve the housing service					I	
A, B, C & D	Develop Tenant Scrutiny and launch the framework and recruitment at the Tenants Annual Conference 2012						
A, B, C & D	Undertake a consultation with tenants and leaseholders regarding the creation of local area panels						
A & D	Ensure that Tenant Involvement objectives are					A & I	

Link to NTO	Objective	Reference	Who?	How?	By when?	Administrative or Impact	Hyperlink to evidence
	included in the staff appraisal process						
A, C & D	Where possible and practical arrange training jointly for staff and tenants						
C	Set up a framework to continually look to recruit tenants to be involved in the service via News and Views, surveys, events, consultation and the local media						
C	Develop a system to plain English all communications to tenants and leaseholders						
A	Use the STAR survey results to identify and plan tenant led improvements across the borough						
A	Use the STAR survey result to develop a Leaseholder Strategy to improve satisfaction within the area and generate more leaseholder involvement						
	Year 2						
C	Establish an editorial panel to include tenants						

Link to NTO	Objective	Reference	Who?	How?	By when?	Administrative or Impact	Hyperlink to evidence
	and leaseholders for all publications including leaflets and posters						
D	Promote involvement opportunities at sign of a new tenancy						
D	Recruit dedicated resource to support the TLC and other committees in minute taking and arranging meetings etc.						
D	Identify budget and space to create a “tenant resource centre”						
A	Delegate budgets through sub committees, local area panels						
A	Set up a process for the TLC to complete an annual report to be submitted to Housing Communities Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet						
	Year 3						
D	Constitute the TLC in a move towards a tenants federation and work with members						

Link to NTO	Objective	Reference	Who?	How?	By when?	Administrative or Impact	Hyperlink to evidence
	services to include within the Councils constitution						
C	Establish tenant associations in high rise blocks and sheltered accommodation						
B	Increase the percentage of involved tenants by 5% between 2012-15						
B	Establish a menu of flexible involvement opportunities to enable everyone to have an input into the housing service						
C	Develop electronic methods of involvement via the website						
B & C	Introduce neighbourhood agreements via the local area panels to ensure that tenants priorities for improvements are being tackled in their local area						

