



AGENDA ITEM: 11

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Communities Overview & Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	19th June 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 - Update
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Carolyn Leech, Team Leader Policy and Participation – Author Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing Service - Responsible Officer
Purpose of report:	1. To update the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Get Involved Strategy 2012-15.
Recommendations	1. The committee to note the report and the progress made.
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>
'Value For Money Implications'	The Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 supports tenants and leaseholders getting involved through the monitoring of budgets to ensure that tenant priorities are tackled effectively. <u>Value for Money</u> Value for Money is a regulatory requirement for all social housing provider's and by ensuring that our tenants are empowered and involved in the services that they receive will ultimately ensure that we are giving good value for money.

Risk Implications	Failure to deliver the Get Involved Strategy could risk the image and reputation of the Housing Service; mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that tenants actively monitor the strategy on a regular basis to ensure that the Strategy is met.
Equalities Implications	Tenant Involvement deals with the whole tenant and leaseholder community, including young people.
Health And Safety Implications	There are no health and safety implications.
Consultees:	Chair of the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee Chair of Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee Vice Chair of Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee Two co-optee members of the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members of the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee
Background papers:	Review of Tenant and Leaseholder Committee report of 21.03.13 Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 (appendix 1)
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

1.0 Background

The Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 was created following the tenant involvement review and as a result of working with our involved tenants and leaseholders. The strategy is a three year plan to increase the number of tenants and leaseholders that are involved in working with the Housing Service and to give those that want to be involved a flexible choice of ways to get involved. An update on the strategy is taken to the Tenant Involvement Group on a regular basis and an update is also given to the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee on a quarterly basis. The Chair of the Tenants and Leaseholder Committee also receives a monthly update on the Strategy.

In addition to the strategy and to support the delivery of involving more tenants and leaseholders in the housing service we have set a performance indicator for 2013/14 to have 500 tenants actively involved in the housing service by the end of March 2014. The year two objectives assigned to the strategy action plan (appendix 2) will help us work towards this target.

2.0 Year one of the Strategy – complete

The first year of the strategy is now complete and so far we have:

- Established a new involvement structure
- Undertaken a full and comprehensive review of all of our Committees Terms of Reference, and the Tenant Involvement Code of Conduct
- Developed a Tenant Scrutiny framework
- Begun work on a consultation framework
- Created a supported housing forum
- Set tenant involvement objectives for all housing staff as part of the appraisal process
- Hosted Tenant Involvement training workshops for staff
- Arranged for tenants to attend the ARCH conference as well as Housemark and CIH training sessions jointly with members of staff

The Tenant Involvement Team has also been restructured to ensure that adequate resources are in place to deliver the strategy and increase the number of tenants and leaseholders that we have actively involved with the Housing Service.

3.0 Year two of the Strategy

Year two of the strategy began in April 2013 and some of the key objectives for year two are:

- a. The “You are the Key” campaign, a recruitment campaign to get more tenants and leaseholders actively involved in the housing service and this has resulted in more tenants and leaseholders wanting to be formally involved with the committees. The recruitment process will be finalised by mid-June and in addition to new members joining our established committees will see us begin training for the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.
- b. Tenant Scrutiny is a new and exciting phase for tenant involvement within the authority and will ensure that we are not only meeting our co-regulatory requirements following the withdrawal of the Audit Committee and as part of the Homes and Communities Regulation Framework, but that we are working to embed tenant involvement throughout the service. We created the framework for Tenant Scrutiny in year one of the Strategy and following the finalising of the recruitment process the appointment of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel will be one of our key priorities. We are currently looking at training packages to ensure that those involved have the relevant skills to undertake the roles that they are engaged in.
- c. Recruitment will remain one of our key objectives and priorities for 2013/14, and we will continue to use Housing News and Views to advertise tenant involvement opportunities as well as other medians such as the volunteer centre. Throughout 2013/14 we will look to involve more tenants and leaseholders in lower level activities in their own location by developing mechanisms for tenants and leaseholders to be actively involved in an armchair capacity. One of the ways we are going to involve tenants and leaseholders in an “armchair” capacity is by introducing a tenant led editorial panel, which will give tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to work with us on publications and other communications that go out to tenants and leaseholders.

- d. Extending the Orchard Housing Management System to include the Resident Involvement module, will enable us to create registers of involvement to include the number of hours that tenants and leaseholders have volunteered as well as a map of the activities that they have been involved in. Evidencing the number of volunteer hours helps us to benchmark our service and forms part of our annual return to Housemark. In addition to this the new customer portal will enable tenants and leaseholders to have contact with us easily and will aid the development of our armchair involvement methods, such as giving tenants and leaseholders the ability to report on the standard of cleaning and window cleaning in blocks of flats, plus the standard of landscaping in their local areas – all key priorities for our residents.
- e. We are also working on ways to involve tenants and leaseholders in helping us to prioritise the spending of the environmental improvements budget – this is a budget that is utilised for large scale projects such as developing drying areas, improving bin stores, tackling parking as part of our local offer etc. This also links closely to the STAR improvement plan, and enables us to tackle the local problems affecting tenants and leaseholders in their areas by enabling tenants and leaseholders to work with us and help to prioritise the way this budget is spent.
- f. To support this during the first quarter 2013/14 we will be working with the Asset team to support consultations in the following areas:
 - Wilstone
 - Riverside Gardens
 - Teddar Road
 - Howe Road
 - Longlands
 - Wood View
 - Surrey Place
 - Miswell Lane
 - Shugars Green

4.0 Events and spreading the “Get Involved” message

There are also a number of events that we are organising or are involved in this year which will help to promote tenant involvement and also enable us to engage with tenants and leaseholders locally. We are currently working with Residents Services to host the Coronation lunch in Queen Square, Adeyfield to celebrate the Queen’s Coronation, and will be attending the Tring Carnival in June. Both of these events will be used to help us to promote our tenants and leaseholder conference which will be held in September.

In addition to these events we are arranging a networking and joint discussion forum for tenants and leaseholders with Thrive, Watford Community Housing Trust, St Albans Council and Hightown Praetorian – this is an excellent opportunity for residents of neighbouring organisations to come together to solve problems and was developed following a suggestion from one of our tenants. We are also working on a project to improve the Memorial Garden at Gade Tower and will be supporting the next Corporate Ward Walk.

We have recently attended the recent Aids and Advice days in Bennetts End and Adeyfield where we were able to speak with tenants and also met with the Dacorum

Communities for Learning team who we are hoping to do some more work with around Digital Inclusion. We also regularly attend the Neighbourhood Action Groups on behalf of the Housing Service, where we engage with tenants and leaseholders. We are also working with Residents Services on the Youth Action Entertainers Project which brings young people into the Sheltered Schemes to entertain the residents, and we are also supporting Residents Services work with the Youth Forum. This has enabled us to recruit a young person to be involved with us and act as a Young Persons' Champion – we are hoping to recruit more young people over the coming year.

The results from the STAR survey highlighted to us the need to get more tenants on line or give them the ability to get on line, this is now even more important with Digital by Default and to help support this priority we are looking at ways to create a tenant resource centre. The resource centre will be based in a community hub, like a community centre or library and it will be equipped with PC's and other resources that tenants may need access to but find it difficult to locate. The resource centre and the links we are building with Dacorum Communities for Learning will mean that we can get more of our tenants connected to the internet and out of 'digital exclusion'.

5.0 Taking it a step further

We are working towards the National Tenant Organisations accreditation and the Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 supports this objective; achieving the NTO approved accreditation will mean that we have in place a system of accountability, self-regulation and scrutiny that actively involves our tenants. This will mean that we have not only successfully implemented the strategy but have developed tenant involvement so that tenants have an active voice that is heard and responded to.

In addition to the existing monitoring mechanisms in place at the end of year two we will again be undertaking a review of the strategy with the Tenant Involvement Review Group and will work with them to set the objectives for the final year of the strategy.