



Agenda item: 10

Summary

Report for:	Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	20 July 2016
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	'Get Involved' – Tenant Involvement Strategy
Contact:	<p>Portfolio Holder: Councillor Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Author: Emily-Rae Maxwell – Policy and Participation Team Leader</p> <p>Responsible Officers: Andy Vincent - Group Manager Tenants and Leaseholders, Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing, Emily-Rae Maxwell – Policy and Participation Team Leader</p>
Purpose of report:	The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with an overview of the drafted tenant involvement strategy. This includes the approach taken by the Policy and Participation team to involve tenants in the development of the strategy. Throughout the report there are a number of questions for committee members to consider. Feedback will then be used in the final report to Cabinet.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the vision and commitments set out within the strategy and consider whether this will help to shape the housing service to reflect the thoughts 2. Review the changes in structure for delivering the strategy including a change in the TLC committee and three levels of involvement 3. Review the questions included in the report and recommendations made by the Policy and Participation team and provide feedback 4. Offer any further feedback on the proposed approach to tenant and leaseholder involvement
Corporate objectives:	<p>Quality tenant involvement contributes to all the council's corporate objectives (see appendix 1 - 'Get Involved' vision).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clean, safe and enjoyable environment • Building strong and vibrant communities • Ensuring economic growth and prosperity • Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need • Delivering an efficient and modern council

Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>There are no additional financial implications. The '<i>Get Involved</i>' strategy will be delivered using the Policy and Participation team budget.</p>
'Value for money' implications	<p>All involvement activities delivered will be assessed to ensure they are for the benefit of our tenants and leaseholder population and those accessing the housing service where appropriate.</p> <p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>It is important to us that our tenants feel they are getting value for money. The council, along with tenant representatives, will monitor the cost for delivering tenant involvement and ensure this is delivered effectively. Sharing resources and skills with partner organisations and exploring opportunities for additional funding will also help us to deliver more for less. By giving tenants a voice we are able to shape the service we offer to better meet their needs.</p> <p>The '<i>Get Involved</i>' strategy recognises the role tenants and leaseholders play in helping the housing service to achieve value for money. Within the strategy we are committed too:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring the impact of tenant involvement for tenants and the housing service • Being transparent in the cost of tenant involvement and identify where this has led to savings and improvements
Risk implications	Housing Risk Assessment is presented to the committee on a quarterly basis
Community Impact Assessment	Community Impact Assessment carried out – see appendix 2
Health and safety Implications	N/A
Consultees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant and Leaseholder Committee • Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel • Tenant Sub-Committee • Tenant Inspectors • Wider tenant and leaseholder population • Housing service officers • Cllr Margaret Griffiths
Background papers:	<p>Appendix 1 – '<i>Get Involved</i>' strategy</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Community Impact Assessment</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Tenant and Leaseholder Feedback</p>
Historical background	Formal resident involvement at Dacorum Borough Council began in 1998 with the Housing Advisory Panel (HAP) which ran until 2010.

<p><i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context).</i></p>	<p>In 2009 the Council launched the ‘Housing Futures’ project to consult with residents on a proposal to transfer the housing stock to a newly created housing provider (housing association).</p> <p>A Tenants Steering group was set up to consider all aspects of the proposal. During the Housing Futures project tenant involvement activity was limited to consulting on the transfer proposal.</p> <p>In 2010 the Council decided not to pursue the stock transfer proposal. The emergence of Self-Financing enabled the Council to meet Decent Homes and develop its own new council homes.</p> <p>The Housing Futures project identified a number of interested and talented tenants and leaseholders wishing to engage with the housing service.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the previous Housing Advisory Panel meetings had not been productive and that a new approach was needed to move forward. A separate ‘Forward Together’ working group was set up to form an action plan around a new tenant involvement structure.</p> <p>The group was made up of selected HAP and Tenants Steering group members, staff and previously uninvolved tenants.</p> <p>From ‘Forward Together’ the format and election process for the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee was agreed. The first meeting of the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee (TLC) was in January 2011 and the meetings have run monthly since this time.</p> <p>Tenants’ roles have continued to grow and in 2012 it became a requirement for every landlord to create a formal scrutiny panel(s). This allows people to highlight opportunities to improve, challenge and scrutinise delivery of housing services and act as representatives for the wider population.</p> <p>The Tenant Involvement strategy expired in 2015. With a number of issues arising with the structure of tenant involvement and a drive to involve more tenants and leaseholders the housing service saw this as an opportunity to work with tenants to create a modern and flexible approach that provides an opportunities for all to get involved.</p>
<p>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</p>	<p>TIRG – Tenant and Leaseholder Review Group</p> <p>TLC – Tenant and Leaseholder Committee</p> <p>P&P – Policy and Participation</p> <p>HCOSC – Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>HCOC – Housing Co-Regulatory Overview Committee</p> <p>TLSP – Tenants and Leaseholders Scrutiny Panel</p>

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Following the expiration of the ‘*Get Involved*’ strategy, both staff and tenants took the opportunity to reflect on the housing service’s approach to involvement. This report outlines the approach taken by the Policy and Participation (P&P) team to refresh the ‘*Get Involved*’ strategy and how the changes in structure will increase opportunities for tenants to shape the housing service.

1.2 A number of methods were used to involve a variety of stakeholders in the development of this strategy. This included; a Tenant Involvement Review Group, staff feedback, surveys and focus groups with the wider tenant population and an opportunity for all current involved tenants such as the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee (TLC) to submit their comments on the drafted strategy - see *appendix 1 for the 'Get involved' strategy*.

1.3 The feedback captured identified a number of areas that require direction from the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HCOSC). This report will outline these areas and make recommendations for members to consider

2.0 Proposed strategy and structure

2.1 The vision for the '*Get Involved*' strategy is for our tenants and leaseholders to feel listened to, empowered to influence decisions and given opportunities to challenge the housing service.

2.2 Using the information gained through consultation, the P&P team have developed four commitments and a new structure for delivering tenant involvement.

2.3 The four commitments are based on the priorities of our tenants and leaseholders. These are:

- Commitment One: All Dacorum tenants and leaseholders have the opportunity to '*Get Involved*'
- Commitment Two: Dacorum Borough Council works in partnership to ensure the housing service is shaped by the needs of our tenants
- Commitment Three: Young people within Dacorum's tenant population have a voice and a positive influence in their local communities
- Commitment Four: Dacorum Borough Council's housing service is accountable to our tenants and leaseholders

2.4 The structure for delivering these four commitments includes three levels of involvement - see *appendix 1 page 9*.

Level One 'Our Tenants': 'Our Tenants' is about developing conversations between the council's housing service and the whole tenant population. By using a range of communication channels such as the development of social media and getting out and about in the community we will build better relationships and improve how we communicate with our tenants.

Level Two 'Service Shapers': 'Service Shapers' is an adaptable approach to involving tenants that focuses on specific topic areas. Within this level of involvement activities such as 'burst groups' allows tenants more flexibility to '*Get Involved*' as it is often achieved over a short period of time. Other activities within 'Service Shapers' include 'Youth Tenant Involvement' and 'Tenant Inspectors' where individuals within the tenant population can take part in projects that benefit the wider tenant community.

Level Three 'Official Involvement': 'Official involvement' brings together tenant and leaseholder representatives, local professionals, Councillors and the council's housing staff to regulate, scrutinise and challenge the housing service. This level of involvement includes a Housing Co-Regulatory Overview Committee and Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel. All are required to meet on a quarterly basis and review key areas of the housing service.

2.5 The variety of activities and different levels seeks to create a more active and involved tenant community.

2.6 A key change as a result of this structure includes the replacement of the TLC with the Housing Co-Regulatory Overview Committee (HCOC). The new committee will include a mix of tenants, leaseholders, members, staff and independents.

3.0 Stakeholder feedback and recommendations

3.1 The following feedback has been incorporated into the drafted strategy or will be used to draft the delivery plan once the strategy and structure has been approved - see *appendix 3 for full feedback*.

- A more flexible range of activities so more tenants can get involved
- The use of digital channels such as email, social media and texting will be used to contact tenants when delivering this strategy
- To deliver commitment one we will ensure that tenants and leaseholders in rural areas have access to involvement opportunities
- Training for all tenants and leaseholders involved at level three
- The terms of reference for committee members will include a minimum requirement of one year and a maximum of four years involvement

3.2 Implementing the new strategy and timescales

There will be no meetings of the current TLC between July and September. This is to allow the P&P a mobilisation period for recruiting to the new committee and launch of the *'Get Involved' strategy*.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel (TLSP) have agreed they would also break from meeting during this time and have requested support from the P&P team to recruit additional members during this period.

A concern raised by the current Tenant and Leaseholder Committee is *'who between now and then is holding the council to account on the services they deliver?'*

There will be minimal impact regarding the service being held to account due to our elected members and Portfolio Holder continuing to play this role during the mobilisation period.

Going forward the role of HCOC will be a formalised route of consultation and performance review. All feedback provided by HCOC would then be included reports to HCSOC and Cabinet.

****Do members feel the requested mobilisation period is appropriate?***

****Do members feel the housing service will be sufficiently held to account during this timeframe?***

3.3 Representation at the Housing Co-Regulatory Overview Committee

There are a number of suggestions regarding the make-up of the HCOC. The aim is to recruit a total of ten committee members which includes a mix of tenants, leaseholders, members, housing officer and independents.

1. *The wider tenant population felt the committee should include: 2 independent members, 1 councillor, at least 1 officer, 3-4 tenants and 1-2 leaseholders.*
2. *TIRG felt the committee should include: 5 Tenants, 1 Leaseholder, 2 Non portfolio holding councillors, 1 officer and 1 Independent*
3. *Leaseholders have requested a fairer representation by having a minimum of 2 leaseholders*

The P&P team recommend that a housing officer is not counted as a committee member. The role of the officer is to facilitate and support the committee to meet.

****Which option do members feel would best represent the tenant and leaseholder population?***

****Do members agree that the housing officer should play a supportive role as opposed to participating in the committee?***

3.4 Recruitment to the HCOC

During consultation it was proposed to the current TLC that any recruitment to the new HCOC would be undertaken by council P&P team. This was to allow current committee members to apply without a conflict of interest.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Committee raised the following concerns:

- *What is stopping the staff from only picking "yes" people?*
- *Should tenants not be involved in the recruitment process?*
- *Will current committee members be given priority when recruiting for the new committee?*

The P&P team will consult with the wider tenant population to form a list of skills and qualities required when recruiting and use this to base any decision on.

Feedback from other committee members suggests that Councillors are involved in the recruitment process. This ensures that the tenant and leaseholder population are represented.

Current committee members are encouraged to apply however it is felt that any roles should be offered to all tenants and leaseholders equally.

****Do members feel by consulting with the wider tenant population we are able to capture the type of people tenants feel should be recruited to the committee?***

****Do members feel that involving Councillors in the recruitment process will be transparent and fair to all who apply?***

3.5 Committee Chair

Throughout consultation the approach taken to electing a committee chair remained undecided. The following three options received equal preference:

1. a Councillor to take the role as chair
2. a chair is elected by the committee once recruited
3. a chair is advertised as part of the recruitment process
4. an independent is given the role of chair

There are a number of points to consider when selecting the role of chair including the skills required for managing meetings and how this will be overseen.

****Which of the above options do members feel would be the most appropriate approach to selecting a chair?***

3.6 Regularity of meetings

Using the consultation feedback, the P&P team have suggested the committee meet formally on a quarterly basis. HCOC members will also have the opportunity to review documents and submit feedback remotely. This proved successful in developing the 'Get Involved' strategy as it gave all members the opportunity to submit their thoughts.

The current Tenant and Leaseholders raised the following concerns:

- *Is it not going to be a lot of work if meetings are only on a quarterly basis?*
- *Is this really going to scrutinise the council and services if they are only meeting 4 times a year?*

The quarterly meetings will be used to collectively review performance and update the committee on key decisions within the service. Any key documents requiring consultation would be circulated remotely to all HCOC members and feedback will be submitted via email as this is a more effective use of their time.

Additionally committee members will be encouraged to visit teams if they feel this is appropriate. HCOC members will be supported to maintain contact throughout the year.

****Do members feel quarterly meetings are sufficient to review KPI's?***

****Do members feel that documents being reviewed remotely by committee members would be an effective way of maintaining contact and giving feedback throughout the year?***

Conclusion

To conclude the Policy and Participation team have worked with a variety of stakeholders to develop the proposed '*Get Involved*' strategy.

The purpose of the report is to gain direction from members on a number of outstanding areas to consider. Throughout the report, the Policy and Participation team have made recommendations to members and outlined the proposed approach to limiting any impact to our tenant population.

The team feel the new strategy and proposed structure will be a positive move forward and help to build a better relationship with our tenant and leaseholder population.

Ultimately this will help to shape the housing service to the needs of our tenants and leaseholders and provide an effective service that offers value for money.