

Appendix 4 Tenant and leaseholder feedback on the ‘Get Involved’ strategy and delivery of tenant involvement

Tenant Review Group - Feedback

- All agreed that there is a need for change, a need for clearer remits. All agreed that TLC should play a more strategic, monitoring role and sub-committees should work more closely on consultations.
- Digital Involvement - TIRG attendees were most likely to respond to email surveys. They suggested that we need to explore more digital channels of communication to engage with younger tenants.
- Rural areas - It was suggested that focus groups be held in village halls rather than in Hemel Hempstead as they would be more accessible for rural tenants.
- TIRG members recommended that we maintain a flexible approach to consultation, by continuing to hold focus groups, going out into the community to speak to tenants and conducting telephone surveys. They also recommended that tenants involved in any formal committees be trained to an appropriate level and some attendees were keen that meetings take place on a quarterly basis.

Wider Tenant and Leaseholder Population – Feedback

The Housing Involvement Officers completed telephone and face to face surveys with 101 tenants and leaseholders to inform the drafting of the strategy. All of these people were asked questions relating to digital engagement and formal committee structures, with additional questions relating to young people, rural areas and leaseholders asked to those groups for whom these issues were most pertinent.

Two focus groups were held on 10 May 2016 with a combined attendance of 15 tenants and leaseholders.

- The majority of tenants and leaseholders would prefer to receive customer satisfaction surveys by text message or email.
- Most people believe that a high-level committee would need to be offered training to attract them, with payment of committee members the second most popular opinion.
- Most tenants and leaseholders in rural areas and villages would prefer door-to-door surveying or focus groups held in locations more convenient to them.
- All rural tenants and leaseholders agreed that all consultations relating to the tenant population as a whole should involve a proportion of rural and village residents.
- The Housing Regulatory Overview Committee should include; 2 independent members, 1 councillor, at least 1 officer, 3-4 tenants and 1-2 leaseholders.
- Formal meetings should take place every 6 weeks or bi-monthly with 3-4 hours preparation before meetings.
- There was no overall consensus regarding how a chair of the committee would be selected. An elected chair from the committee, an independent chair and a councillor or council staff chair were all equally rated. There was little appetite for a revolving chair.
- The minimum length of service for the committee should be one year with an option to extend for a further year.
- The maximum number of years for committee members should be four years.

Tenant and Leaseholder Committee - Feedback

John Howard:

Page 5 under 'Our Tenant Population'

The deprived areas, mostly within Hemel Hempstead with a high density of council owned homes. You understand there are several factors that contribute to people being considered deprived, has there been any activity by the housing team to break the barriers, what are these recognised barriers and how does the tenant involvement team feel that through tenant involvement this will help remove these barriers.

Page 6 'Equality and diversity'

With all the Tenant & leaseholder events & involvement strategies that have been used why are some people and groups within our tenant population finding it difficult to have their voice heard. By tailoring our opportunities of involvement we hope to encourage these tenants to have their say. Once again the word barrier is used, can the tenant involvement team give any definitions of these barriers. "This will allow us to give our tenants a voice and remove barriers that not only stop them from being involved but impact their lives."

I agree with the commitments, but in commitment 3 you don't have to be a tenant to be a voice and a positive influence in your local community, there are other groups such as neighbourhood action forums.

The level of involvement tiers I feel would appeal too many of the Tenants & leaseholders.

I feel that in the level 2 sector there should be a group responsible for monitoring the planned & unplanned work. The foundation for tenant involvement as I understand was the formation of the HAP [Housing Advisory Panel] later to be reformed at the HMEC [Housing Maintenance & Environment Committee]. Both a key factor in getting tenants & lease holders involved. My last concern is the make-up & selection process for the Housing Regulatory Overview Committee.

Housing Co-Regulatory Overview Committee.

At the last T.I.R.G.[Tenant Involvement Review Group] the consensus of the personnel to make up such a committee was a panel of 10 with the following

- 5 Tenants
- 1 Leaseholder
- 2 Non portfolio holding councillors
- 1 Housing Involvement officer
- 1 Independent

Will this be a foundation for the Committee set? The past selection processes have involved a panel with Tenants & Leaseholders. May I suggest that, as there appeared to be no common ground at the last TLC

meeting as to how this panel would actually be selected between the Tenant involvement groups & the Involvement team, that the panel be made up of local councillors who have been involved, are involved in housing or are actual tenants or lease holders themselves.

Tenant:

I think you have covered everything and the structure looks fine to me, giving people an opportunity to be involved at a level that suits them. It would be great if more tenants would join in so fingers crossed!

Barry Newton – Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel:

The only sticking point I saw was selection of members of various committee members. Would recruitment in first instance will go to known existing members who express an interest? I would then suggest that once this framework is established prior to interviewing any new applicant by officers names are circulated to the established members not to select but to determine if they object to anyone, I think this would be regarded as some control over selection was being exercised by the tenants.

Alan Horne:

Page 5 Our tenant population

“Within Dacorum there are a small number of deprived areas. Most of these areas are within Hemel Hempstead and are areas with a high density of council owned homes.”

I am concerned that this statement could allow someone to identify individual households, and it sets up the perception of second class tenants and the possibility of discrimination. A more general statement about deprivation amongst tenants would be acceptable.

Page 6 Equality and diversity

“We recognise that some people and groups within our tenant population find it difficult to have their voice heard.”

This implies that they have come forward but haven't been listened to, which is wrong, rather than they find it difficult to come forward, be it for language or cultural reasons, for which a solution needs to be found.

Page 6 Delivering a better service

“to achieve the TPAS Landlord Accreditation.”

Only very few tenants will know what TPAS is. Accreditation for what? Could be anything. Needs to be clear that it is Resident Involvement Landlord Accreditation. Unless, of course it is only a Corporate document.

Page 8 The ‘Get Involved’ structure...

Level One ‘Our Tenants’:

“and getting out and about in the community”

I get comments that everything happens in Hemel and other towns are ignored.

Level Two 'Service Shapers'

I'm not sure whether the title 'burst groups' would attract or put off tenants, it doesn't immediately indicate what is involved (Corporate words?)

Level Three '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."

With the wider participation it needs to be remembered that only the landlord functions of the Housing Service can be charged to the HRA.

Without seeing the Terms of Reference, the full recruitment process, and the final makeup of the bodies, it is not possible to determine whether they can truly be defined as "Tenant Involvement". *"All are required to meet on a quarterly basis and review key areas of the housing service."* Quarterly meetings are not likely to be often enough to challenge anything.

Rose Kosmalski:

- The sentiment for tenant involvement comes across
- Concerns the council will struggle to recruit at the high levels of involvement such as the committee
- I noticed on page 8 of the document will only meet on a quarterly basis, is this correct? In that case then yes you may find tenants that will participate in a quarterly meeting. 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?
- Again I would like to say regarding the council staff "interviewing" the potential tenants for the two committee's, this document is all about tenant involvement but where is the involvement for tenants in the selection process. What is stopping the staff from only picking "yes" people?
- On a final note you have also stated that the formal arrangements will start in October 2016, so who between now and then is holding the council to account on the services they deliver? What sort of things will be over looked between now and then? Who will be looking at the budget?

Mavis Cook:

The approach on the document regarding Tenant Involvement addresses the tenants, despite the effort to explain what you mean by "tenant" to include the leaseholders as service recipients.

Work needs to be done on the **Leasehold Best Value Review Report, 14 October 2014** to which I made my attached comments before launching into getting leaseholders involved.

A good relationship and working platforms between the DBC and leaseholders needs to be established (a)to also break passive partnerships and (b) create an understanding on how and where the Council is coming from to meet their needs, through a business perception, which are not the same as those of rent

paying tenants, apart from common service delivery on communal areas, planned works and environmental development which benefits both recipients and the communities at large.

Having a specific and different tone of **communicating** with the leaseholders to give them the appropriate identity, would be useful, so that they could also be encouraged to be part of the involved and collaborative partnership, and would no doubt have some input on contributions to help shape the services.

On the 3 levels of the involvement structure, there needs to be balanced representation from the leaseholders, on the top tier; **Level Three** - it would be fair to have 4 tenants and 2 leaseholder, a leaseholder on the **Scrutiny Panel** and some leaseholders on Level Two, especially on **Regular Forums** and possibly **Burst Groups** depending on topics, with the opportunity of dipping in and out where ever relevant.