



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All Wards

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Overview & Scrutiny Management Board
Cabinet

7 May 2009
11 May 2009

Tenants' and Leaseholders' Involvement & Consultative Activities - Update

Report of Corporate Director of Adults and Housing

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the tenants' and leaseholders' involvement and consultation activities and the resulting outcomes in terms of service improvements.

Also, members are asked to agree the recommendations in section 3 of the report which relate to the new approach to funding Tenants' & Residents' Associations' (TARAs) activities and the Environmental Works and CRI funding streams in the Housing Capital Programme.

2. Summary

The new involvement and consultation structure was developed and introduced in January 2008, following Cabinet approval. This has led to a large increase in the number of tenants and leaseholders engaging in service improvements both locally and at a strategic level.

The exception to this is the Area Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forums that receive little support or attendance from tenants and leaseholders. It was hoped these Forums, by being open to the whole community, would be better attended than the old Community Associations, however this has proven not to be the case.

This report proposes that Area Tenants' & Leaseholders' Forums are merged into the existing Ward Community Meetings.

A new Tenant Compact, called Improving Housing Services, has been developed and agreed by tenants, leaseholders and the Lead Member for Housing. This is available in the Members area, for information.

Tenants' and Residents' Associations requested a review of the funding arrangements for TARA activities due to the difficulties they face over capacity to meet the Service Level Agreement. The existing Agreement offers an all or nothing approach. The new proposals offer a flexible alternative but still maintain the balance between supporting tenants and ensuring public money is being spent appropriately.

It is proposed that Housing Managers, in consultation with Ward Community Meetings and the Housing Management and Repairs Performance Panel, engage with local communities to identify priority improvements to be funded by the Housing Capital Programme Environmental Works CRI funding streams.

3. Recommendations

Members are recommended to agree the following.

- a) To note the outcomes achieved through the new involvement and consultation structure agreed by Cabinet in January 2008 (para 4).
- b) Agree the new flexible funding arrangements for TARA activities (para 6).
- c) To agree the proposed consultation mechanisms for the Environmental Works element and CRI funding of the Housing Capital Programme (para 8).

4. Report

4.1 Background

Tenants and leaseholders had previously expressed concerns over the effectiveness of the existing structure in 2006, in particular the Community Associations and the Housing Management Board. There were also concerns that the existing structure at that time:

- Involved only 62 TARA members, which equated to 1% of the tenant population
- Provided limited involvement opportunities for leaseholders
- The Tenant Compact had delivered no real outcomes for tenants
- There were no monitoring mechanisms in place
- There were no clear links between tenant involvement & service improvements
- Customer satisfaction levels were low
- Low BME involvement levels

Tenants and leaseholders were also concerned about the role of housing in the new Community Meetings and wanted to ensure that the new structure included a forum to discuss housing issues.

In response to these concerns, during 2007, a series of away days were held with TARA members, and other active tenants and leaseholders, with the purpose of reviewing the involvement and consultation structure, at that time, and to make suggestions for a new approach.

The new involvement and consultation structure was developed and introduced in January 2008, following Cabinet approval. This has led to service improvements both locally and at a strategic level.

4.2 Tenants' and Leaseholders' Informal Involvement and Consultation Structure

A range of 'Stay at Home' groups was developed in 2007, in response to the 2006 Status Survey results, which clearly showed that the majority of tenants, surveyed, preferred more informal and local involvement and consultation activities. The table below shows how tenants stated they wanted to be involved.

Groups & Activities	% of responses	Groups & Activities	% of responses
Reading Newsletters	57	Attend citywide meetings	14.6
Postal Surveys	42.2	Tenant Inspector	12.7
Attend local meetings	38.6	Estate Walkabouts	12.2
Identifying environmental improvements	34.9	Telephone surveys	11.6
Attend conferences	19.2	Joining a TARA	6
Use website	18.6		

The 'Stay at Home' Groups help to review draft documents and to ensure they are fit for purpose and user friendly. They also review the way we communicate with tenants and leaseholders. At present, these groups have approximately 300 members and have commented on a range of policies, proposals, letters, newsletters and awareness campaigns.

4.3 Outcomes from the Tenant Involvement Service Improvement Panel

A Service Improvement Panel (SIP) was established in 2007 to oversee the review of tenant involvement and consultation structures, this consisted of tenants, leaseholders and staff members. The aim was to develop more inclusive involvement and consultation opportunities, which were open to all tenants and leaseholders, irrespective of their personal circumstances and commitments.

The outcomes of the SIP included the development of the following:

- A new formal involvement and consultation structure
- Tenants' & Leaseholders' Expenses Policy
- Tenants' & Leaseholders' Learning & Development Policy
- New Tenant Compact now called 'Improving Housing Services'
- Performance monitoring targets and mechanisms
- TARA Computer Policy
- Code of Conduct for meetings
- Generic TARA Constitution
- Tenants' & Leaseholders' Performance Panel Constitution
- A new approach to funding TARA premises and funding TARA activities

4.4 Tenants' and Leaseholder' Formal Involvement and Consultation Structure

The table below provides details of Leicester's formal involvement and consultation structure, post January 2008, when the new approach was adopted.

Formal Groups	Role	No of Reps
Tenants' & Leaseholders' Performance Panel	Monitors performance of the service Scrutiny role Constituted Meets quarterly and upon request Can commission SIP to look at issues in more detail Replaced Housing Management Board.	16 Local reps 2 Leaseholders 1 Sheltered rep 6 Elected Members
Service Improvement Panels	Commissioned by the Performance Panel Focus on one area of the service and make recommendations for improvement Task and finish group	Approx 12 – open to everyone
6 x Area Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forums	To discuss local housing issues To act as a consultative group Replaced Community Associations	Open to anyone
6 x Grants Panel	Linked to each Area Forum Decide local delegated HRA spends At least three TARA members per Panel	At least 1 member per TARA for the area also open to all tenants
Citywide Tenants' & Leaseholders' Conference	A combined citywide conference will be held for tenants and leaseholders with the purpose of reviewing past activities and planning future activities	Open to all tenants and leaseholders

4.5 Effectiveness of the new involvement and consultation structure

4.5.1 An Impact Assessment framework was developed and introduced in January 2007, with the aim of evidencing how our involvement and consultation activities have contributed to improving services for local people. It also shows the costs involved in achieving these outcomes and makes value for money judgements on this cost.

The table below provides a summary of costs, including staff time, the number of people involved, diversity statistics, and cost per hour for the activity during 2007-08.

Involvement Activity	Number Involved	% BME	% Disabled	Total cost (Includes staff time)	Hourly rate
Consultations	8 100	20.4	10.75	17 989.76	20.50
Groups	455	21.9	8	19 689.00	25.00
Events	2 254	5	3.9	5 186.34	28.46
TARAs	158	18.1	4.75	19 013.43	32.84
Total	10 967	16.35	6.85	61 878.53	26.70

4.5.2 Local staff also undertakes estate inspections and invitations are sent to all tenants and leaseholders, and also Elected Members to take part in these events . Between 6 -25 local people take part in each inspection.

4.5.3 The table below shows the average spend per property on involvement and consultation activities during 2007 /08. This information is frequently requested by external organisations, particularly during benchmarking exercises.

Quarter	Total Properties	Average spend per property £
Quarter 1	22 561	1.51
Quarter 2	22 490	1.06
Quarter 3	22 465	0.90
Quarter 4	22 413	0.95
Average		1.11

4.5.4 The table below provides examples of local service improvements achieved through involvement and consultation activities.

Security doors installed	ASB issues raised and action proposed
Benefit Advice events held on the estates	Estate inspections highlight local issues
Laundry rooms and access improved	Removal of bushes and shrubs
Estate clean-ups	Security lights installed
Improved pathways	Closing alleyways
Established local priorities	Green areas cleared
Improvements to housing office reception areas	Provision of a youth shelter
BMX Track developed	Improvements to communal areas
Local people helping victims of ASB	Local estate notice-boards

4.5.5 The table below provides examples of strategic service improvements achieved through involvement and consultation activities.

Improved satisfaction levels (78.3%)	City Housing News reviewed
Improved ASB Customer Satisfaction	Leaseholders' Forum more effective
Review of the involvement and consultation structure and new approach developed	Barriers to involvement identified & action required to overcome these barriers
Service Standards developed	Improved communication to tenants and leaseholders
Repairs & Maintenance Tenants' Charter developed	Neighbourhood Agreements set local priorities, in partnership with local people
The development of Area Housing Plans	

4.6 Involvement in strategic issues

The Tenants' & Leaseholders' Performance Panel has been consulted on the following:

- DCLG HRA Finance Review
- Housing Management Vision
- Housing Repairs & Improvement Vision
- Choice Based Lettings
- PFI Bid
- District Heating
- Rent setting
- Housing Capital Programme

4.7 Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Levels

Tenants and leaseholders volunteered 11,490 volunteer hours to help improve services during 2007- 08.

5. 'Improving Housing Services' – New Tenant Compact

The Tenant Compact has been reviewed and updated by the Service Improvement Panel and renamed 'Improving Housing Services'. The Panel did not want a ceremonial launch or signing of the document and instead it was sent to the Lead Member for Housing, for approval, in September 2008.

A number of performance targets have been identified and are monitored by the Tenants' & Leaseholders' Performance Panel, on a quarterly basis.

A copy of Improving Housing Services is available in the Members area.

6. A new approach to funding TARA activities

Traditionally, TARAs were funded on the number of properties in their geographical area and to receive funding were required to sign a contract with the Council, which included meeting the terms of the Service Level Agreement (SLA).

Tenants' & Residents' Associations have struggled with this all or nothing approach to funding their activities. New TARAs, in the process of setting themselves up, rarely have the capacity to meet the Service Level Agreement, straight away. Equally, established TARAs, due to various reasons, also have capacity issues in meeting the Service Level Agreement.

TARA representatives requested that officers of the Council explore more flexible ways of funding TARA activities. In response to this, officers worked with the Service Improvement Panel, to design a new funding structure, which met both Council and TARA requirements. Extensive consultation took place with TARAs and members of the Service Improvement Panel. The proposals developed by the Tenants' Service Improvement Panel received wide support from TARAs, with only two of them raising any issues of minor concern.

The new proposed approach will mean that TARAs, to receive the basic funding, will no longer be required to sign up to a Service Level Agreement and instead will only need to submit minutes of their AGM meeting and audited accounts. This will reduce the amount of information TARAs will need to provide.

All TARAs will receive baseline funding of £500 to cover their basic activities, such as running their Committee and administration tasks.

TARAs with premises will receive additional funding to cover the costs of running and maintaining the premises. This would include rent, utilities, rates, Public Liability Insurance and any other premises associated expenses. There is no limit proposed on the number of TARA's that can operate from premises in a Ward.

TARAs will also be able to apply for extra funding, above their basic funding, for additional activities, such as providing local newsletters and undertaking consultations. To receive this additional funding TARAs will need to work with their local Housing Managers to show how their proposed activity will lead to improved local services. This will include evidencing local support for the proposed activity and what outcomes will be expected. As part of the funding grant, an impact assessment exercise will be undertaken by the local Housing Manager to establish value for money and actual outcomes.

An additional benefit of this funding approach is that the Council can support informal tenant groups that wish to undertake a one off activity, which will benefit their local community. At present, funding is only available to TARAs. The Service Improvement Panel has recommended a range of activities that would be eligible for additional grants. A copy of their recommendations is attached at Appendix A.

The overall amount of funding available to TARAs will remain unaffected by these new funding proposals.

Guidance notes will be developed for TARAs and staff members and training sessions will be held once the new funding structure is agreed.

7. Area Tenants' & Leaseholders' Forums (ATALFs) / Community Meetings

7.1 ATALFs were developed to cover all areas of the city and originated as part of the review of the formal tenant consultation structure, with the purpose of:

- Promoting the housing service
- Enabling consultation – including feedback and requests
- Endorsing Grant Panel decisions

7.2 The following table outlines attendance across each of the six areas and the number of meetings completed during April to September 2008.

ATALF	Number Meetings	Total Attendance	Total Cost
New Parks	2	35	1025.03
Saffron & Eyres Monsell	2	12	1203.50
Rowlatts Hill & Humberstone	2	8	1253.78
Beaumont Leys & Mowmacre	2	5	898.47
Centre	3	19	920.90
Braunstone	2	2	1039.63
Total		81	6341.31

7.2.1 The actual cost per involved tenant / resident equates to £78.28

7.3 ATALFs meetings in the following areas have failed to attract any tenants and leaseholders to at least one meeting.

- Beaumont Leys and Mowmacre
- Rowlatss Hill and Humberstone
- Saffron and Eyres Monsell
- Braunstone
- New Parks

7.4 Rather than complement the Ward meetings, the ATALFs appear to have competed with the Community Meetings.

7.5 It was agreed at Directorate in December 2008, in consultation with the Tenants' & Leaseholders' Performance Panel, that the ATALFs should be consumed into the existing Community Meetings.

- Housing Management staff will attend all Ward Community meetings that have significant Leicester City Council housing stock within the ward.
- The carousel session would still be used for each area to have a 'stall' to promote Housing service.
- Housing issues and information for consultation could be taken to the Community Meetings, which would enable wider consultation with tenants, leaseholders and residents.
- The Grants Panel will remain in its current form, independent of the Community Meetings, and will be convened as and when HRA spending decisions are required, as only tenants can be involved in HRA spending decisions.
- Housing should appear annually on the Community Meetings agenda to enable Neighbourhood Housing Managers to brief the meeting about available budgets, the process for submission of ideas and time scales.

8. Approval Mechanisms for the Environmental Capital Programme

Council has agreed £400,000 be set aside in next year's Capital Programme to be used to start and tackle infrastructure issues on estates, i.e fencing / walls and hard and soft areas, which have been neglected over recent years with the push to achieve the Decent Homes Target.

Infrastructure specifically relates to physical structure. This includes items such as roads, parking, parks, properties, communal areas, paths, estate areas, walls and hard and soft areas.

In addition, it was agreed, when the Housing Capital Programme was approved by Council, that the £220,000 allocated for environmental improvements under the Capital Receipts Initiative would be pooled with the £400,000 base figure in the Housing Capital Programme. The reason for this was so when improvements take place they can deal with larger issues and will have a bigger impact on the neighbourhoods that tenants live in.

However, it is essential that Elected Members and local residents are actively engaged in identifying and setting local priorities and service improvements that could be funded. The Ward Community meeting will be used as the primary mechanisms for tenants and residents to submit ideas and proposals. This may be through sub-groups or public meetings. The aim is to maximise the involvement of local people and the Ward Councillors so what comes out reflects what the local community want, and see as the biggest issues facing their area.

It is proposed that Neighbourhood Housing Managers meet with Local Ward Councillors prior to each new Financial year to discuss and develop area specific project ideas that the local community have requested.

It is proposed that after engaging with local communities, Neighbourhood Housing Managers will put together potential schemes, in partnership with the Ward Community Meetings. Detailed proposals including costings will then be presented back to the Ward Community Meeting for agreement on what will be submitted to the Tenant & Leaseholder Performance Panel.

The Tenants' & Leaseholders' Performance Panel will then be consulted and asked for their views on each scheme, from a tenant's perspective. Tenants & Leaseholders will then prioritise the submitted proposals and submit them to the Director of Housing Services and the relevant Cabinet Lead member for approval. Council agreed, when setting the Housing Capital Programme, that authority to approve

schemes from the above process be delegated to the Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member for Housing.

This process helps Council meet its objectives of participatory budgeting.

The £180,000 Environmental budget that is allocated to local tenants' organisations will be unaffected by this proposal. This budget as in the previous year will be shared equally between six areas, these are:

- New Parks
- Saffron & Eyres Monsell
- Beaumont Leys & Mowmacre
- Humberstone & Rowlatts Hill
- Braunstone
- Centre

9. Financial Implications - Graham Troup (ext. 297425)

9.1. The 2009/10 HRA revenue budget includes provision of £147,000 for "Tenant and Resident Involvement" of which £115,000 is for the direct funding of TARAs, including the provision of premises where applicable.

9.2. Also, the 2009/10 Housing Capital Programme contains provisions of £400,000 for Infrastructure Issues on Estates, £220,000 for Environmental Works under the Capital Receipts Initiative (CRI) and £180,000 for the Environmental Budget allocated to local tenants' associations. The report includes general proposals as to how these provisions should be spent.

10. Legal Implications - Greg Surtees, Senior Solicitor, Legal Services (ext. 29 6453).

It is recommended that Landlord Services Managers determine (by reference to guidance in the Procurement Toolkit) whether sums to be paid to TARAs represent funding or procurement. If procurement is envisaged, it should take place in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules ("CPRs"). Funding is not provided in accordance with the CPRs and (where its value does not exceed £5,000) it can be provided under a minimal funding agreement, available through the Commercial & General Team, Legal Services. Landlord Services Managers should ensure that agreements are entered with a legal entity, rather than a committee. There are no other legal implications concerning the recommendations of this report.

11. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES / NO	Paragraph References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	Yes	2 4.1 4.2 4.3.1 4.3.5
Policy	Yes	4.2 4.3.6
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	8
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly / People on Low Income	No	

12. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

Report to Cabinet (January 2008) - Proposed Changes to the Consultative Structure for Local Authority Tenants

13. Consultations

- 13.1 Consultation on the new formal involvement and consultation structure, TARA funding review and the Tenant Compact have taken place with the Service Improvement Panel.
- 13.2 The Tenants' & Leaseholders' Performance Panel were consulted on the merging of the Area Forums with the Community Meetings.
- 13.3 The Lead Member for Housing was consulted on all of the above issues.

14. Report Author

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Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	N/A
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)

TARA Funding Review – Funding for Additional Activities
Service Improvement Panel Suggestions

Suggested Additional Activities	
Service Improvement Panel suggestions with reference to the type of activities TARAs could undertake that would attract additional funding	
Surveys	Fun days / consultation events
Leaflets	Translation services - leaflets
Newsletters	One – off projects lead by TARAs or individuals
Criteria	
The SIP suggested that criteria are developed to ensure additional activities will deliver real outcomes for local people.	
Timescale	
The SIP suggested that all bids are submitted by the end of April of each financial year.	
Reserve	
The SIP suggested that an amount of approximately £2,000 should be held in reserve for emergencies.	
Information packs and application form	
An information pack will be produced and provided to all TARAs and NHMs. This will include an application form and guidance on completing the form.	
Approving or refusing applications	
The SIP suggested that all applicants should receive information about the outcome of their application. Where an application has not been successful details should be provided about why the application was not successful and suggestions for improving a further application.	