



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED : ALL WARDS

CABINET

6 NOVEMBER 2000

TENANT PARTICIPATION IN COUNCIL HOUSING

Report of the Director of Housing

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

A consultation paper at Appendix A has been sent to Chairs of Tier II Tenant Groups and the Leicester Federation of Tenants Association (LFTA).

This report proposes a new structure for tenants and the Council to engage in meaningful discussion about landlord issues.

It also recognises the current arrangements for resident involvement and the need to address environment issues. The present consultative arrangements are shown at Appendix B.

The proposals respond positively to the Government's desire for better engagement with tenants through Tenants Compacts within the overall aim of better engagement between the Council and the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS & FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. That the funding for LFTA cease as soon as possible and be redirected to the new Community Associations.
2. It be noted that additional funding will be required of £70k for areas with no premises and no workers.
3. That a Landlord Board would be formed as set out in the report instead of Tier I that would make rent recommendations to Cabinet.

TENANT PARTICIPATION IN COUNCIL HOUSING

This paper sets out proposals about how Council tenants could be more involved in decisions about Council housing and the involvement of residents in their communities.

It draws on the development of tenant compacts, the new political management structures in the Council, the Housing Green Paper, which encourages the separation of housing strategy from the day to day landlord role and the need for the Council to improve its engagement with the public.

A group of tenants' representatives, Councillors and Officers have been working with consultants from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service to develop Tenants Compacts for Leicester.

The consultant report on tenant compacts shows that Leicester has very advanced arrangements for tenant participation, yet there is still scope for improvement. In particular the level of involvement by tenants and residents is low, the resources available to each tenants association is inconsistent and the role of LFTA needs to be reviewed. The consultants found favour with the local Tier 2 meetings and felt that the Citywide Tier 1 meetings were not so successful.

Tenants Associations

There are currently 18 tenants associations in the City.

Most tenants associations welcome residents, whether they are owner occupiers, typically Right To Buy, or tenants of other landlords, because their work covers the environment and community in which they all live, and is not solely confined to landlord issues.

There needs to be support therefore for the formation of new tenants and residents associations and endeavours to increase public involvement in their activities. There also needs to be a contribution from the HGF in recognition of the non HRA workload and activities.

Community Association

The consultants report recognises the Tier 2 arrangements as highly effective and it is proposed that this be retained and built on by redefining its role and perhaps renaming them Community Associations, for example.

The suggested role of each Community Association could be :

- to be aware of landlord issues, receive reports on repairs, complaints, arrears, voids and raise with the Council areas of concern
- to spend environmental and other budgets delegated to them

- to influence main stream spending priorities in their area for Council and non Council services.
- formulate an estate development profile as a blueprint for the area and part of the Local Compact and overall Community Plan; and
- put forward spending priorities over a 3 year budget plan and recommend rent levels

Each Community Association would be allocated a full time worker, employed by the Council; will be provided with an office and reception for all tenants in their Community; have access to accommodation for meetings; have a budget to be allocated to their tenant associations for publicity and promotional material and refreshments associated with public meetings of the TA but to be expended and accounted for by the CA and not the TA. These proposals, if accepted, would bring the level of funding for each Tier 2 area up to a much higher level approaching the position in the Central area where St Peters and St Matthews TAs each have premises and a worker. The TAs that currently have workers would still be funded for these even though Central area would have 2, when other Community Associations have one.

The TA Development role of the LFTA will be undertaken, in future, by the Community Associations.

Landlord Board

The Government has made it clear in the Housing Green Paper that it expects Councils to separate their strategic housing role from the landlord role. This is clearly linked with the governments intention to improve the quality of Council housing over the next 10 years.

It would be beneficial to separate strategy and the landlord role to reflect the need for more meaningful involvement of tenants in the landlord role and to establish an understanding of how this relationship would work. Such a separation of roles would gain the recognition of the government in our Housing Investment Programme and could influence the level of resources we receive. It is therefore suggested that we establish a Landlord Board who would have the following responsibilities:

- increase involvement of tenants
- reflect the separation of strategy and landlord role
- make comprehensive recommendations to the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee about rent levels, service quality and expenditure priorities.

It is proposed that the Landlord Board have a voting membership of 6 residents (one each from each of the Community Associations), 6 Councillors, and 6 other people who should be able to bring finance, customer care, personnel, development, community development, business or other skills to the Landlord Board. The Director of Housing will be the official advisor to the Board. The Landlord Board would be supported by Council officers as required, who would not have voting rights.

The Landlord Board would recommend rent levels and spending priorities to the Cabinet, make representations to the Council and other bodies about spending priorities for Leicester and its communities. It would resolve quality issues within budget as advised by DoH who would continue to have responsibility for spending within budget and maintaining income levels.

Council

The Council for this purpose comprises the Cabinet, Housing Scrutiny Committee and the Council itself.

The Cabinet determines what action is necessary regarding recommendations from the Landlord Board, particularly to do with rent, spending priorities, budget monitoring problems and additional spending required to address quality issues. Spending priorities within budget but between communities would be resolved by Cabinet.

The Housing Scrutiny Committee examines decisions and recommendations of the Cabinet and Council and monitors performance. It would have one non-voting member of the tenants as a representative on the Committee.

The Council would still be overall responsible for determining the rent levels and overall spending priorities.

Role of LFTA

The role of LFTA in the future could be as a forum for tenants across the City to meet together. The TPAS report makes it clear that LFTA should be less focused on the Council.

The present role of LFTA to develop new TAs and support existing ones would, in future, be provided by the 6 Community Associations. The LFTA funding currently provided by the Council would be transferred to support the Tier 2 Community Associations.

Although there would be no role in the future for the LFTA as we currently know, the Council would fund meetings etc of TA's City wide as and when they feel appropriate.

Author

This report has been prepared by the Director of Housing and his staff for consultation with tenants' representatives to provide a new basis for tenant and Council engagement through Tenant Compacts.

	Tenants & Residents Association	Community Association	Landlord Board	Council Scrutiny	Council Cabinet
Membership	Any tenant or resident	Chair of each TRA, Ward Cllrs	Member of each CA(6) 6 Councillors, 6 others	Councillors and one tenant with no voting right	Councillors
Officers	Upon request	NHM, Depot Manager, Worker, Police, Leisure, Health, Education etc	DoH AD Management, Technical, Resources and others upon request	AD Resources	Director of Housing
Role	Airing of concerns, provision of advice. Identify proposals for CA. Views on redevelopment	Spend priorities, performance management, rent views. Identify proposals for LB views on redevelopment. Lobbies for service funding priorities Ensure engagement	Recommend Rent level. Spending priorities, response to quality concerns. Redevelopment. Lobbies for all services funding priorities. Monitor engagement	Monitor performance, scrutinise cabinet decision and recommendation Comment on rent level	Decide spending priorities with budget. Recommend rent level to Council
Funding	Publicity, promotion, refreshments, re public meetings	Control resources for TA.s Environmental works budget	All costs controlled by DoH as long as within budget. HRA budget and capital programme	Not applicable	Not applicable

APPENDIX B

CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR TENANT CONSULTATION

Over many years the Council have consulted with tenants, mostly about landlord issues, but also environmental matters. The approach to consultation has been very successful, and for of many Councils and tenant organisations, yet officers and consultants feel it needs improvement.

The present arrangements are as follows:

- Tier 3 Tenant Association meeting. All tenants and residents are invited, an elected Chair and Officers. These are funded as voluntary organisations by the Council from the HRA.
- Tier 2 All the Tenant Associations in a geographical area meet with Councillors, Depot Manager, Neighbourhood Housing Manager, Police and Officers from other departments, as requested to deal with performance issues and environmental budget.
- Tier 1 Representatives of each Tenant Association meet with Councillors and Housing Directorate to be briefed on and express views on strategic issues that affect all tenants, such as rent rise or allocations policy.

In addition to this, the Council currently provides £33K to the Leicester Federation of Tenants Associations to provide support to all TAs and encourage new TAs to be formed.