

**REPORT FOR: TENANTS' AND
LEASEHOLDERS'
CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

Date of Meeting: 8 November 2011

Subject: **INFORMATION REPORT -
Feedback from other Council
led Resident Involvement
Activities**

Responsible Officer: Lynne Pennington, Director of Housing
Services

Exempt: No

Enclosures: Appendix 1 - Outcomes of Resident
Involvement

Section 1 – Summary

This report provides feedback to TLCF on a wide range of Council led service specific and service wide resident involvement activities, and also reports on the outcomes of resident involvement, for example what the department has done differently because of the input received from residents.

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

- 2.1** This report provides an update on the various officer led resident involvement activities that are taking place across Housing.
- 2.2** It is important to note though that some activities have been delayed, or put on hold pending the outcome of a review that HQN have been commissioned to undertake in to our current Resident Involvement structure. This review is underway currently and is targeted at helping us ensure that all the various resident involvement activities fit together effectively, to avoid duplication of work, to clarify roles and responsibilities and to agree processes and sign off procedures. A number of officers, residents, the portfolio holder for housing and the vice chair of TLCF have been interviewed as part of the review. The cost of this work is being funded from the contingency provision.
- 2.3** At the time of writing the report there are no outcomes to report from this review, but if it is possible to do so a verbal update will be given at the meeting.
- 2.4** This is the third time a report to TLCF has included an appendix that details what has been done differently as a consequence of residents involvement-in other words capturing the successful outcomes of resident involvement. Members of TLCF have an opportunity to ask for more information on any of the entries on the table if they are not convinced these changes have been made. This process is intended to help officers and residents to work together to further develop resident scrutiny of housing's performance.
- 2.5** However it should be noted that there are also a number of areas where resident involvement has led to recommendations for change that are still being developed. Examples are where residents have been asked for their views on changes to operational procedures (such as the Anti Social Behaviour procedures) where work on reviewing the procedures is not yet complete or in determining what steps can be taken to improve customer services following the first round of resident led mystery shopping. These outcomes, once finalised, will be reported to future TLCF meetings.
- 2.6** This report also gives an update on progress with each of the 3 local offers chosen by residents for this year.

Asset Management

- 2.7** The Asset Management Group has a meeting planned on 24th November to explore ways to improve resident engagement in the service.

Councillors Currie and Bath have both been invited to attend and a report on the outcome of this meeting will be made to a subsequent TLCF.

- 2.8** Paul Mullins has set up a tenants group to take an active part in the decisions to be taken as the procurement of the future repairs contract progresses. It is anticipated that this group will continue to be involved in monitoring the contractor (or contractors) after the contract has been awarded. To help with this contact is being made with other local housing organisations who already have active resident engagement in monitoring performance of repairs and major works contracts to allow residents to see first hand how this is achieved.
- 2.9** The largest major works scheme this year is at Francis Road. Asset Management staff have held drop in meetings for local residents and have set up a monthly project team meeting with resident representatives.

Estates Services Steering Group

- 2.10** At the meeting on 8th September 2011 there was some detailed discussions about the perceived failing of the Grounds Maintenance team to deliver against the service level agreement.
- 2.11** The Group demanded a meeting with officers which due to annual leave is still in the process of being arranged.
- 2.12** In addition to this, and as a result of these concerns and the increase in the number of complaints received both directly from residents and through Estate Inspections senior officers the housing portfolio holder discussed his concerns with the Leader and arranged a strategic meeting to determine what needs to be done. Officers are currently working through the agreed actions from this meeting which will be shared at the next residents meeting.
- 2.13** A further Estates Services Steering Group is to be convened to take things forward, a date for which had not been agreed at the time of writing this report.
- 2.14** In July it was reported to TLCF that 6 consultation meetings had taken place to discuss proposals to resolve parking issues on certain housing estates with local residents. Following the meetings residents were invited to complete feedback forms with their preferred options before a final decision was made. These feedback forms have now been analysed and the way forward had been determined. However the receipt of a petition from a number of residents who did not attend consultation meetings has delayed things, but it is anticipated that the agreed schemes will move forward in the near future

Tenant Inspectors

- 2.15** In July it was reported that the Estates Services team had been working with the West London Estate Services Steering Group to train tenant inspectors to grade caretaking services. The first round of inspections, where our tenants inspected Brent Housing Partnership Estates and in return Brent tenants inspected Harrow estates went very well and recommendations for improvements to the service were taken on board.
- 2.16** Next year the inspection programme is to be extended so that our tenant inspectors will visit estates owned by all 6 of the West London landlords taking part in the scheme. In return 18 of Harrow's estates will be visited and inspected by tenants from the other 5 landlords. Now that the tenant inspectors have completed the first round of inspections the aim next year is for inspections to be more outcome focussed so that recommendations could lead to changes in the way caretakers work to improve the appearance of estates. Should the work of the inspectors lead to any recommendations to improve services it is anticipated that these can be met from existing service budgets. Any costs related to the inspections themselves can also be funded from existing budgets.

Complaints Panel

- 2.17** The complaints feedback panel has not met recently, due mainly to the departure of key staff in both the corporate and housing complaints teams. It is hoped to reconvene the panel early in 2012 when new staff have settled in and the new housing complaints process has been operating long enough to be able to measure improvements as a result.

Housing Editorial Board

- 2.18** The Housing Editorial Board now meets monthly to review and approve all housing communications to residents to make sure they are they are in Plain English, are clearly written and convey information in a format that will be easily understood by residents. At the last TLCF a request was made for more residents to get involved. One tenant now attends and a second is being invited. More tenant representatives would be welcome.
- 2.19** The Board has reviewed a number of leaflets, surveys and other information for tenants and leaseholders as well as signing off Homing In. However the purpose of the board and it's role in signing off information does need review as a number of items have come to the board before their content has been agreed elsewhere. It is anticipated that clearer guidance on the process to be followed to bring items to Editorial Board will emerge amongst the outcomes of the HQN review of the Resident Involvement structure.

2.20 A housing events and communications group met three times during the summer to oversee the Housing Changes consultation activity. The group was set up with this specific task in mind and, having completed its task has now been wound down. Members of the group reviewed proposed consultation activity, assisted with consultation roadshows and gave some helpful views which we can use for future consultations.

Sheltered Housing Review

2.21 Following the 3 consultation meetings held with tenants of sheltered housing feedback on the options that emerged from discussions has been sent to all sheltered housing tenants. It was agreed that officers would do further work on 2 or 3 options for the way the service would be managed in the future and then discuss these with tenants in more detail. Work is progressing well and further meetings with tenants will be held in mid-late November.

2.22 A sub group of tenants who represent their sheltered scheme at Harrow Sheltered Residents Association played a big part in helping to set up and structure the consultation meetings and helped to encourage tenants to attend. Officers would like to thank these tenants for their invaluable help.

Value for Money Group

2.23 The residents Value for Money group has been focussing on ensuring that tenant service charges are fair and provide good value for money over the last two meetings. The group questioned tenants being charged for services twice via council tax and HRA service charges to which the Finance Officer provided an example to demonstrate that this was not the case and explained how the shared amenities budget contributes towards an imbalance of charges. The group also queried the rules on Housing Benefit payment of service charges. In addition to service charges, where work is ongoing the group has looked at budget headings and what they include and Support Services costs (SSC's)

Local Offers

2.24 The 3 local offers that will be taken forward this year were chosen following the Housing Fair in April. These are:

- Consultation Charter
- Repairs Guarantee
- Improvements to caretaking service

2.25 Progress has been made on the Consultation Charter. A group of staff have met to develop an internal major works consultation procedure. Two leaflets on major works consultation for leaseholders and tenants have been prepared in consultation with HFTRA and approved by the Editorial Board. They are now at design and print stage. Other aspects of the consultation charter, including a revision to HFTRA and TRA

constitutions have been agreed by HFTRA but are awaiting the outcome of the recently commissioned HQN review of resident engagement.

2.26 Progress has also been made on the Repairs Guarantee and this was discussed at HFTRA. However there is a conflict between what we can expect from the existing repairs contract and what can be expected in the future, following the procurement process. There is ongoing discussion on this but it may be appropriate to delay the completion of the guarantee until after the procurement exercise is further forward.

2.27 Enhancements to the caretaking service are also being planned to both deliver the local offer and respond to those areas within the resident satisfaction survey where satisfaction was less than 75%. Another initiative to help improve caretaking services is to increase resources in the caretaking team by introducing an apprenticeship scheme. This scheme is being funded from a budget created in the current financial year specifically for this purpose. An update on progress with this scheme is included elsewhere on the agenda.

Capturing Outcomes of Resident Involvement

2.25 The table at appendix 1 details individual or team actions that all housing staff have been invited to provide that demonstrate how consulting residents and listening to their views lead to changes in the way we work. Members of TLCF are invited to challenge and/or ask for further information on anything contained in this table if they are not convinced these changes have been made, or would like some more details.

Section 3 – Further Information

All relevant information has been included in the report.

Section 4 – Financial Implications

This information report has no specific financial implications. Any service improvement issues that arise as a result of residents ideas and suggestions will be considered within the relevant service area budget.

Section 5 – Equalities Implications

There are no specific equalities implications arising from the information provided in this report. However once proposals move forward, should any equalities issues emerge impact assessments will be completed at that time.

Section 6 – Corporate Priorities

The proposals in this report incorporate the corporate priority:
United and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads

Name: Donna Edwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 19 October 2011		

Section 7 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Maggie Challoner, Head of Resident Services, Tel: 020 8424 1473

Background Papers: None

Appendix 1 - Outcomes of Resident Involvement

Resident Involvement Activity or Staff Member/ Team Name who implemented the change	What has been done differently as a result of Resident involvement/consultation	Who was involved?	Comments from Residents/TLCF
Leaseholders told us they wanted more options to pay their bills	We are introducing major works loans to provide longer periods for leaseholders to pay their bills	Leaseholder support group and staff	
Leaseholders told us that they wanted to have an input into policies that affect them	We asked the Leaseholder Support Group for input into our response to the London Assembly report into Leaseholder service charges.	Leaseholder support group and staff	
Leaseholders told us they were unsure about what was covered by the Council's building insurance policy	We sent a copy of the policy to the Leaseholder Support Group and to aid understanding we have arranged for a presentation on the policy to be made at the October meeting of the group. We are also currently working on an internal process to enable claims for repairs to be submitted promptly		
Housing Editorial Board	Residents made comments on the look and content of the Housing Changes booklet, and these were implemented	Residents representatives, portfolio holder for housing and staff	