

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

Date: 10th September 2012

ITEM 7(j)
**Title: North Tyneside
Homes' Tenant &
Leaseholder Involvement
Strategy 2012 - 15**

Portfolio(s): **Housing**

Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Paul Mason**

Report from Directorate: **Community Services**

Report Author: **Ian Conway, Head of North Tyneside
Homes** **Tel: (0191) 643 7501**

Wards affected: **All**

PART 1

1.1 Purpose:

The purpose of the report is to seek approval from Cabinet for the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy 2012 - 15.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Agree the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy 2012-15 as set out in Appendix 1 of this report
2. Note that the Head of North Tyneside Homes in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing will undertake a review of Area Housing Forums and report back to a future meeting of Cabinet.

1.3 Forward Plan:

This report appears on the Forward Plan for the period 1st September to 31st October 2012.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report relates to Priority 6 within the Council Strategic Plan 2012/15 by giving people more say and enabling them to make a positive contribution to improving services and community life.

The report also relates to the Sustainable Community Strategy within the Policy Framework.

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

1.5.2 In 2009 North Tyneside Homes (NTH) and its tenants agreed a tenant and leaseholder strategy and tenant and leaseholder participation compact which set out NTH's commitment to put tenants at the heart of everything we do and support tenants to get involved in a wide range of ways. The strategy and compact were supported by a 3 year action plan setting out the key steps that would be taken to improve tenant and leaseholder involvement in North Tyneside. Progress has been monitored by tenants on a three monthly basis with officers from NTH. The action plan has now been completed and has resulted in a significant improvement in tenant and leaseholder involvement.

1.5.3 We have moved rapidly from having a few people involved in a limited number of ways, to having a wide menu of involvement activities through which we engaged over 2000 customers last year. Tenants' views and suggestions for improving services are collected on a regular basis through a wide range of well attended events and activities. These views and ideas are fed into tenant led service development groups that meet regularly to monitor the different parts of the housing service, discuss with managers areas of under-performance and identify improvements. Improvement ideas are then fed back to all tenants so that they can see the difference they are making.

This involvement has resulted in new services, improved policies and challenging service standards and targets including:

- The introduction of new a Victim Support Officer and the Handyperson Scheme for older and disabled tenants
- Improved policies covering repairs and anti-social behaviour
- Tighter timescales for carrying out repairs
- Service standards and challenging targets for all key areas of service
- Improved choices for tenants undergoing improvement work
- Introduction of on-line rent statements and anti social behaviour reporting
- Over £400,000 of Better Estates funding on schemes to improve the environment on estates decided by tenants
- 7 Local Offers setting out specific service improvements to meet tenants' priorities.

All of these have been achieved whilst reducing the cost of the service by moving from 7 involvement officers in 2008/09 to 3 in 2012/13. When compared with other housing organisations the service is now low cost and high performing.

1.5.4 There is a need to update the strategy to ensure we continue to improve tenant and leaseholder involvement and meet our legal requirements. Housing regulation has changed since the last compact and strategy and this strategy is influenced by these changes. The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England 2012 sets out the standards that all social landlords are expected to meet. There is a specific Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard that requires landlords to make sure tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to both shape and scrutinise service delivery and hold their landlord to account for meeting the standards. The framework no longer requires social landlords to have a separate tenant compact. Feedback from our tenants has indicated that they would like one clear document that sets a framework for the further development of tenant and leaseholder involvement.

1.5.5 The proposed Strategy has been developed with tenants on our involvement service development group and is based on the views and priorities of the tenants and residents who have been involved in events and activities over the last 3 years. We have consulted widely on the draft with tenants and leaseholders, councillors and other stakeholders. Section 2.3 details the consultation that has taken place. All the views expressed have been taken into account when updating the Strategy.

1.5.6 Whilst it is acknowledged that good progress has been made there are a number of areas where further work is required these include:

- Ensuring that all involvement activities are effective including estate walkabouts, focus group activity, mystery shopping and the Area Housing Forums
- Widening the profile of those people getting involved particularly younger people
- Developing the role of tenant scrutiny further
- Ensuring that there is effective feedback on the difference involvement has made
- Develop further opportunities for co-operation and joint working with other organisations.

These issues have been incorporated into the Strategy which includes key milestones that will be used to measure progress over the next three years. A detailed action plan to deliver against these milestones will be agreed with tenants and monitored by them every three months. Written reports on progress will also be produced for the Cabinet Member for Housing who has asked for an early review of the effectiveness of the Area Housing Forums and their fit within the Council's wider engagement framework.

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

1. To approve the recommendations set out at section 1.2
2. To reject the recommendations – this will mean that the current Involvement Strategy (2009) will remain in place.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England 2012 requires social landlords to support tenants both to shape and scrutinise service delivery and to hold councillors to account. The Involvement and Empowerment standard, which is part of the Framework, sets out required outcomes in relation to this. The original strategy predates these requirements and does not support us in meeting the revised standards. The Strategy will bring the vision and outcomes we are trying to achieve and key milestones in line with the new Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England 2012.

The Strategy has been developed with involved tenants and leaseholders and has also been the subject of wider consultation with tenants, leaseholders and community and voluntary organisations.

The Cabinet Member for Housing has requested a review of the Area Housing Forums. This review will focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of the current structure and their fit within the Council's wider engagement framework.

1.8 Appendices:

Appendix: Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy 2012-15

1.9 Contact officers:

Ian Conway: Head of North Tyneside Homes, 0191 643 7501

Richard Brook: Business Development Manager, 0191 643 7741

Davina Brain: Tenant and Resident Involvement Manager, 0191 643 7742

Alison Campbell: Finance Business Manager, 0191 6437038

1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England 2012
- (2) North Tyneside Homes' Involvement Impact Assessment April 2012
- (3) Equality Impact Assessment: Involvement Strategy 2012-15.

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

The Strategy can be delivered within existing resources and will be available on the Council's website. A limited number of copies will be produced and available on request with a short summary which will also be produced as a quick reference guide. These costs will be funded from within existing Housing Revenue Account resources.

2.2 Legal

Tenants have a statutory right to be consulted on housing management issues as set out in section 105 of the Housing Act 1985. The Housing (Right to Manage) Regulations 1994 allow tenants' or residents' organisations to set up Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) and to take on the responsibility for the day-to-day management of their estates. Leaseholders have the rights to be consulted as set out in the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002.

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England 2012 Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard sets out the following required outcomes:

Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- The formulation of their landlord's housing related policies and strategic priorities

- The making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- The scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved
- The management of their homes, where applicable
- The management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made
- Agreeing local offers for service delivery.

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England 2012 only applies to tenants not leaseholders.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

There has been significant tenant and leaseholder involvement in developing this Strategy. It has been developed with involved tenants who have reviewed the existing compact and strategy and carried out an impact assessment to measure and evaluate the difference made to services by involving tenants. The results of this assessment have been used to inform the Strategy. Further consultation on the drafts has taken place with a wide range of people including:

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

- Partnership and Involvement Team
- Participation and Engagement team (CYPL)
- Elected Members through Member Briefing
- Economic Prosperity and Housing Sub committee
- Area Housing Forums
- Staff
- Cabinet Member for Housing.

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

- NTH involved tenants and leaseholders
- Tenants and residents Groups
- VODA
- Cedarwood Trust
- Mental Health Forum
- NT Local Involvement Network (LiNK)
- Community Healthcare Forum.

In addition:

- All tenants have been informed about the Strategy through 'Housing Matters' and invited to get in touch for more information
- All involved tenants and leaseholders have been sent a copy and asked for comments
- The draft Strategy has been put on the Council's website requesting feedback.

2.4 Human rights

There are no human rights implications directly arising from this report.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out. This showed that a wide range of involvement opportunities are available to meet the diverse needs of tenants. It also showed that young people were still under-represented in our involvement activities. Action will be taken through the new Strategy to address this.

2.6 Risk management

A risk assessment has been carried out and no significant risks have been identified.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no known implications in terms of crime and disorder. The Strategy aims to increase tenant and leaseholder involvement and give them a stronger voice in tackling the crime and disorder issues that affect their area.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

The Strategy aims to increase tenant and leaseholder involvement and give them a stronger voice in tackling the environmental and sustainability issues that affect their area.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Strategic Director(s) ☒
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) ☒
- Chief Finance Officer ☒
- Monitoring Officer ☒
- Strategic Manager, Policy & Partnerships ☒
- Chief Executive ☒