

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT – SUPPORT FOR RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT AND THE TENANT FUND

Update to Housing Scrutiny Committee – Tuesday 2nd September 2003-08-20

Background

1. At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 28th July 2003, Members agreed the following items should form part of the feedback to the Committee on 2nd September 2003.
2.
 - a) Feedback from the Consultation Event held on 19th July 2003
 - b) Feedback from Neighbourhood Forums
 - c) Feedback and comments from the special Tenant Council meeting on 1st September
 - d) Further clarification of the proposed new Resident Officer roles/posts
 - e) Further clarification of the proposed voluntary contributions from leaseholders

3a) Feedback from the Consultation Event held on 19th July 2003

The attached presentation slides (Appendix A) provided members with feedback on the content of the Consultation Workshops and the results of the interactive feedback from the residents who attended the event. The Executive summary of the Consultation report will be available and circulated to members at the meeting.

b) Feedback from Neighbourhood Forums

Appendix B provides a summary of the recommendations made by Neighbourhood Forums during the recent round of consultation. Please note some recommendations are still awaited and a further update will be provided at the meeting.

c) Feedback and comments from the special Tenant Council meeting on 1st September

A verbal report will be given to Members at the meeting.

d) Further clarification of the proposed new Resident Officer roles/posts

i) Work has commenced to identify the role of the above posts. It should be noted that these are initial thoughts and more detailed work will be forthcoming over the next few months in consultation with staff and the Trade Unions.

ii) The areas of involvement are likely to include:

- Arranging induction training for new staff, resident representatives and Councillors (TPC commitment)
- Arranging an annual Area Conference or Fun-day
- Setting up Young People days
- Setting up workshops prior to the Housing Conference

- Liaising with BME and special needs groups
- Liaising with the Corporate and/or Area Consultation Unit to set up regular surveys of test the effectiveness and inclusiveness of the various participation methods
- Monitoring of T&RAs in terms of representation
- Provide advice to the relevant officer(s) on constitution problems that might arise with T&RAs
- Assisting T&RAs in making the annual application for tenant Fund funding
- Provide support for resident involvement and encourage/set up different methods of participation. This work could include:
 - Attending T&RA meetings
 - Setting up local estate focus groups/fundays
 - Holding open day meetings/informal meetings with residents
 - Helping to identify training needs of residents reps and liaising with Federation staff to meet training needs
 - Providing feedback from residents
 - Working with the team or section dealing with major works to set up Project teams/ public meetings
 - Acting as a co-ordinator between the teams within the Area
 - Working with minority and special needs groups on estates
- Using innovative consultation tools to widen participation:
 - Focus Groups
 - Local Conferences/Workshops
 - Informal meetings with staff
 - Fun days/events
 - Local road-shows
 - Single issue groups
 - Survey techniques

iii) At this stage line management structures within the Areas have not been finalised but it is possible that Resident Involvement Officers will sit within the Customer Services section of the new Area structure.

iv) At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, Members were concerned about whether a conflict of interest might arise from the appointment of workers with responsibility for working in tenant community development whilst reporting to Housing Management.

v) In considering this issue it may be helpful to Members to note that prior to de-centralisation into Neighbourhood Housing Offices, tenant community development officers (then called District Community Officers) were directly line managed by District Housing Managers without conflicts of interest arising. In addition, as the Strategic Director of Housing manages all sections within Housing conflicts of interest are unlikely to arise.

Conflicts of interest for Resident Involvement Officers within Housing Management are even more unlikely to arise, as it is proposed to transfer part of the current community development function to the Federation.

e) **Further clarification of the proposed voluntary contributions from leaseholders**

The Divisional Housing Manager responsible for the Leasehold Management Unit has now taken up this issue. Initial consideration has been given to the subject of voluntary contributions from leaseholders but there are a number of factors that make this an option that is unlikely to be pursued, including:

- There would be not be any certainty as to the level of income a voluntary contribution would provide as leaseholders could change their mind at any time as to whether they paid or not.
- It would be extremely difficult to collect voluntary contributions and the cost to the Council to do this, would not be feasible.
- Contributions for Leaseholders would need to be in direct proportion to that paid by Tenants for fairness to ensue. If only a small minority of leaseholders elected to pay a voluntary contribution, the amount could be substantial.

In view of this, discussions have been held with the Leaseholder Working Party, who agree that a voluntary contribution to the cost of a new unified Federation would be impractical.

Further work will be carried out by Officers to identify other options for the Leaseholder Working Party to consider.