

BRIEFING TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – Wednesday 18th December 2002

Best Value Review of Housing Management – *Need to scrutinise the consultation on the Final Vision (in contrast to the consultation on the current service) following concerns raised by Tenants and Residents.*

A. Response to request by Councillor Kim Humphreys to provide a detailed briefing note on the consultation process, setting out consultation activity by Neighbourhood and by date.

1. As part of the Best Value Review consultation process the following groups were set up to run in parallel with the Review Project Board:
 - **Stakeholder Forum** – consisting of Councillors from all 3 parties, Tenant and Leaseholder Council representative and a representative from the Trade Unions. A list of delegates is attached as Appendix 1.
 - **Tenant and Resident Panel** – consisting of a representative from each of the Neighbourhood Forums, SGTO, SBMETRO, Pensioners and Disabilities Forum. A list of delegates is attached as Appendix 2.
 - The Terms of Reference for these 2 Groups are attached as Appendices 3 and 4.
2. Prior to the consultation which took place between September and November 2002, both the Stakeholder Forum and Tenant and Resident Panel met as follows to discuss the proposals contained in the Final Vision document:

Stakeholder Forum

22nd July 2002 – agenda and notes are attached as Appendices 5 and 6.

23rd September 2002 – agenda and notes are attached as Appendices 7 and 8.

Tenant and Resident Panel

23rd July 2002 – agenda and notes are attached as Appendices 9 and 10

The meeting scheduled for 25th September 2002 was subsequently cancelled so those delegates could attend their individual Neighbourhood Forum meetings (see paragraphs 5 and 7).

3. Neighbourhood newsletters containing an article on the Best Value review of Housing Management were published in September 2002 and sent to Tenants and Leaseholders. A copy of the article is attached as Appendix 10A.
4. The original Consultation programme proposed a series of Group Forum meetings (similar to those held during the Housing Options consultation exercise). The original programme is attached as Appendix 11.
5. Following the presentation of the Vision to Tenants Council on 9th September 2002 delegates expressed concern about the consultation arrangements which grouped Neighbourhoods together at Group Forum meetings. Delegates felt that a presentation should be made to all Neighbourhood Forums.
6. The first Group Forum meeting (Crown House, Denmark Hill and Parkside) took place on 10th September at which delegates from only 4 Tenant and Resident Associations were present. A copy of the letter sent to all Tenant and Resident Associations inviting them to the meeting is attached as Appendix 12.
7. In view of the poor attendance and the comments made at Tenants Council it was agreed to abandon the Group Forum meetings and present the Vision to all Neighbourhood Forums.
8. A letter was sent to all Neighbourhood Forum Chairs and a sample copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 13.
9. A table showing the revised consultation arrangements is attached as Appendix N. Members will note that the consultation was extensive and thorough with presentations lasting a

minimum of 1 hour, with summary handouts being made available to all delegates. A sample copy of the subject areas covered in the presentation is attached as Appendix 14.

10. In addition, notes were taken at each meeting and the main comments raised by Tenant and Residents Associations were included as an Appendix to the Vision for the Future document and in page 15 and 16 of the document itself.

B. Response to Questions raised by Councillor Andy Simmons.

1. *Was the Consultation on the Final Vision and Implementation Plan with Stakeholders extensive ?*

The consultation carried out during September to November used the current Housing consultative structures in full and was extensive. The level and extent of the consultation for the vision stage of this review was more extensive than in any other review in Southwark to-date.

In addition during the Implementation period of the review (18 months/2 years) a Project Implementation Board is being proposed which will include tenant and leaseholder representatives and Councillors from all 3 parties. It is also proposed that the Project Implementation Board will review progress against the implementation plan and oversee consultation arrangements.

2. *What percentage of Tenants and Residents Associations received briefings?*

At the 16 Neighbourhood Forum meetings which received and discussed the Draft Vision document a total of 173 tenant/leaseholder representatives attended from 103 Tenant and Resident Associations.

3. *Approximately how many Tenants and Residents were informed of the final vision and implementation plan ?*

Information is not currently available as to how many delegates passed on the information presented at the Forum to their individual Tenant and Residents Associations.

4. *Did a leaflet or any sort of literature go out to individual tenants about the final vision and implementation plan ?*

As reported to Executive on 3rd December 2002, copies of the following documents will be sent once the Scrutiny process has concluded, to:

Chairs of Neighbourhood Forums - Executive Report, Vision for the Future document, Appendix 2 – Proposals for developing the support for tenant and resident involvement and all Appendices (A to S).

Tenant and Resident Associations - Executive Report, Vision for the Future document, Appendix 2 – Proposals for developing the support for tenant and resident involvement.

In addition a Newsletter devoted to the Best Value and outcome will be sent to all Tenants and Leaseholder in January/February 2003 once the Scrutiny process has concluded.

5. *What consultation was there with borough wide tenants groups (SGTO and SBMETRO)?*

Both SGTO and SBMETRO representatives are part of the Tenant and Resident Panel membership and had the opportunity to discuss the vision at the meeting held on 23rd July. Copies of all documents for the Panel meetings are sent out to both organisations. SGTO and SBMETRO Executive Committee Members were present at their individual Neighbourhood Forum presentations and a representative of SBMETRO was present at the meeting with the Strategic Ethnic Alliance held on 1st November 2002.

In addition SBMETRO Executive Members were present at the Tenants Council meeting held on 9th September.

6. *An assessment of the final consultation against the commitments in the Tenants Compact should be provided together with a summary of the tenants compact as an appendix to the report.*

The relevant issues in respect to consultation contained within the Tenant Participation Compact which impact upon the Best Value review of Housing Management have been taken on board within the proposals for supporting and developing tenant and resident involvement. These proposals were presented to Executive on 3rd December and will be developed and reported alongside the review of the Tenants Fund in early 2003. A copy of the summary of the Tenant Participation Compact is included as Appendix 16.

7. *Did consultation on the final vision take place with Tenants Council and Leaseholder Council ?*

Presentations were made to Tenants Council on 9th September and Leaseholder Council on 16th September 2002.

8. *Was there a briefing for Councillors on the final vision ?*

All Ward Councillors are included in the membership of the Neighbourhood Forums and would have received papers and been invited to attend their respective Neighbourhood Forums. A total of 19 Councillors were in attendance at their Forums.

9. *How did the consultation on the final vision with other stakeholders take place ?*

The key Stakeholders identified through the Best Value process as being Tenants, Leaseholders, Councillors and Staff were fully consulted about the draft Vision proposals, through the existing consultation structures – see Appendix N.

10. *How would the council's overall consultation on the final vision measure up against best practice ?*

See response to Question 1.

11. *Why was the closure of neighbourhood housing offices only mentioned orally by the Executive Member for Housing at the Executive meeting ?*

At the Executive meeting held on 3rd December, Councillor Bassom alluded to a reduction of the number of administrative areas in Housing. No decision has yet been taken on the number or boundaries of the Areas to be adopted by housing in the future, although work is currently being undertaken. No work has yet been carried out on location of offices in the future structure and therefore there are no proposals in respect of the closure of offices. This will not be considered until the number and boundaries of the future Areas have been agreed (report to be submitted to Executive during the Implementation of the Review). Full consultation with residents will be carried out on any proposals, which may affect the current opening arrangement of the Neighbourhood offices.

12. *What independent support was provided to Tenants and Residents to digest the implications of a rather complicated report ? (This is best practice and has been used for other major initiatives like consultation on housing stock transfer).*

There has been no independent support provided to Tenants and Residents during the Best Value review process. This is not currently part of the Best value process in Southwark and was not requested by the Tenant and Resident movement before or during the Review. The appointment of an independent organisation is acknowledged as best practice for authorities considering the transfer of their stock to an alternative landlord rather than for a process, which is proposing changes to the way a service is managed.