

**Report to  
Health and Housing Policy Development  
and Review Panel**

**Date** 21 January 2016  
**Report of:** Director of Operations  
**Subject:** TENANT ENGAGEMENT

**SUMMARY**

This report provides Panel members with an update on how housing officers engage with council tenants and leaseholders.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Panel members note the contents of the report.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Council is committed to involving tenants and leaseholders in the delivery of the housing service. This can range from simply completing a questionnaire to attending a meeting or drafting an article for the tenants' and leaseholders' newsletter. Further information on the range of ways in which tenants and leaseholders can be involved is outlined in this report.
2. In order to keep tenants and leaseholders informed we regularly update information on the website and send out a newsletter to all tenants and leaseholders twice a year. Both the website and newsletter provide information about how tenants and leaseholders can get involved; how contact can be made with the Council in order to access services and other items of news and interest.
3. The Tenant Involvement Officer takes the lead on most tenant involvement issues. However, she is supported by other members of the Tenancy Services team.

## **TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT A BOROUGH WIDE LEVEL**

4. All tenants and leaseholders are invited to attend the Tenants' & Leaseholders' Forum. Forum meetings are held quarterly and details are published in the Council's main reception area; in the tenants' and leaseholders' newsletter and on the Council's website.
5. Forum meetings are generally well attended. There is usually a guest speaker at each meeting; recent topics have included welfare reform; how the council lets empty homes; and the council's responsive repairs service. Service performance information is also regularly provided.
6. The Chair of the Forum has an invitation to attend meetings of the Health and Housing Policy Development Review Panel where housing policy and management matters are discussed. Attendance at these meetings enables the Chair to obtain information which can be used to provide some feedback to the Forum on any housing issues that are discussed.
7. A number of tenants and leaseholders form part of an editorial team who work on the tenants' and leaseholders' newsletter. The team meet on a regular basis to help publish two newsletters a year. A number of tenants and leaseholders help deliver the newsletters resulting in large savings in postage.
8. The latest edition of the newsletter featured articles about Assheton Court in Portchester and Collingwood Court in Fareham North West. Both articles were researched and written by tenant members of the editorial team.

## **TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT A LOCAL LEVEL**

9. Whilst it is not possible to get all tenants and leaseholders to attend meetings, many are happy to be involved at a local level. They can do this by joining council officers on estate inspections or by acting as Block or Estate Monitors.
10. We aim to carry out sixteen estate inspections each year, four in each housing officer patch area (North Fareham, South West Fareham and Portchester,

South East Fareham and Stubbington and the Western Wards).

11. Each estate inspection is published in the newsletter and flyers are produced nearer the time of the inspection and posted on noticeboards and through letterboxes.
12. Estate inspections at Frosthole Close have led to the setting up of an informal residents' group. Feedback has also led to landscaping improvements; footpath resurfacing work and improvements to the communal lounge.
13. Tenant and leaseholder representatives, acting as Block or Estate Monitors, provide feedback about block cleaning and grounds maintenance services. Feedback is given across a range of communication methods to suit the individual and include e mail; text; phone; cards and face to face.
14. Estate Monitor feedback led last year to Angelus Close residents being consulted about coming out of the window cleaning contract. Residents had been unhappy with the service and are now employing their own window cleaner.
15. Block or Estate Monitors also provide information about fly tipping and other forms of anti-social behaviour.
16. Two meetings are held each year for these monitors and provide an opportunity to raise any particular concerns and opinions about the cleaning and grounds maintenance services. As staff and representatives from the service provider are also present these enable issues to be discussed and debated face to face.
17. Involving tenants and leaseholders at a local level has enabled them to have a greater input in how any estate improvement funds are to be spent. Examples of this in recent years have included improved bin storage; parking; lighting and security.

#### **TENANT INVOLVEMENT IN MONITORING CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE**

18. A number of tenants are involved in monitoring contractors' performance and attend regular meetings with them. There is a tenant representative who meets with TSG (gas servicing); three tenants meet with the cleaning contractor and two tenants meet with the grounds maintenance team.
19. Recently all of our block and estate monitors were asked to give feedback about the cleaning contract which is being renewed in April 2016. The feedback given was used to improve the specification for cleaning which was sent out to all who tendered for the work. This has helped demonstrate the effectiveness of involving tenants and how they can contribute to the decision making process of services at a local level.

#### **TRAINING FOR TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS**

20. The Council, working with a number of other social housing landlords in the area, provide training opportunities for tenants and leaseholders. Training events are held in central Southampton twice a year and each landlord sends along delegates to each event.

21. The events, which have been run for a number of years, have proved popular and Fareham regularly sends along 10 delegates to each event, where they are able to meet up with and exchange experiences and views with residents from Gosport; Southampton; Portsmouth and Winchester Councils and the Spectrum Housing Group.
22. A number of themed workshops are run at each event covering a range of topics which include: 'Getting Involved'; 'Chairing Meetings'; 'Mental Health & Well-Being'; 'Welfare Reform'; 'Anti- Social Behaviour' and 'applying for jobs'.
23. Aside from the afore-mentioned events we also send at least two tenants once a year to an event run by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service. Earlier this year the event focused on how tenants could help in 'improving services'.
24. Last month 3 tenant representatives together with the Tenant Involvement Officer were invited to speak at a Tenant Participation Advisory Service event in Southampton. The topic was how tenant involvement has helped to improve local services.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

25. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report

### **CONCLUSION**

26. This report has provided Panel members with details of the ways in which council officers engage with and provide support to tenants and leaseholders.

### **Background Papers:**

None

### **Reference Papers:**

None

### **Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Jennie Larkin, Tenant Involvement Officer (Ext 4463).