



AGENDA ITEM: 6(d)

CABINET: 18th June 2013

Report of: Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mrs V Hopley

Contact for further information: Mr S Jones (Extn. 5208)
(E-mail: steve.jones@westlancs.gov.uk)

SUBJECT: TENANT INVOLVEMENT STRUCTURE

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to the updated structure for Tenant Involvement and the new role for the Tenants and Residents Forum (TRF).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The new structure for Tenant Involvement at Appendix C be approved.
- 2.2 The new role for the Tenants and Residents Forum at Appendix D be approved, and the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration be given delegated authority to update the Tenants and Residents Forum Constitution as appropriate.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Cabinet will be aware that the social housing regulator required all registered social landlords to have in place governance and scrutiny arrangements to allow tenants to be part of the co-regulation shaping of landlord services. Originally

this was developed by the Tenants Services Authority but this was abolished in April 2012 and the function of social landlord regulation was absorbed by the Homes and Communities Agency.

- 3.2 Cabinet will recall that at their meeting on the 16th March 2011 approval was given to the recommendations made by the former Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to establish a tenant involvement structure. This structure is shown at Appendix A. At this stage, as the change was complicated enough, it was agreed that there would be no alteration to the existing TRF and additionally, as the Estate Management Boards were transitioning into Tenant and Resident Associations (TRA's), these too were excluded at that time.
- 3.3 As a consequence of the new arrangements, Cabinet agreed to also establish the Landlord Services Committee (LSC) as a Cabinet Working Group. This evidenced Councillor and tenant involvement in co-regulation throughout landlord services. The LSC is a cross member and tenant working group that ensures that we meet the regulators requirements.
- 3.4 The regulator's regulatory focus has been amended in 2012 to primarily ensure value for money and financial viability and risk, but the existing regulatory consumer standards are still in force. It remains important therefore that we have in place effective tenant/member scrutiny and co-regulation arrangements.
- 3.5 There is therefore, a continuing need to review and refresh the current arrangements the Council has adopted to meet the regulator's requirements and reflect the evolution of the structure to remain fit for purpose

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The existing arrangements allowed tenants to be trained and provided a good structure to develop the knowledge and skills needed for tenants to effectively be part of the governance and scrutiny process.
- 4.2 However, over the period, although there were minor alterations to the structure, and as the knowledge of tenants increased, there were issues of duplication. Also the initial period of developing arrangements had subsided and there was a view that the structure needed to be reviewed and rationalised. This was a natural reaction to the organic development of this area of work and is seen in almost all other social landlords. Additionally it was also felt that there was some confusion between the role of the TRF and the Tenant Involvement structure and the need to locate the TRA's into this relationship that was beneficial to all parties.
- 4.3 Therefore it was agreed to seek an external review of the current arrangements and Helena Partnerships were chosen to undertake this task. Helena has previously worked closely with the Council on tenant related matters and has been identified as one of twelve national co-regulatory champions. They have significant experience in this area and have developed a constructive critical friend relationship with us. A copy of the Helena Review is attached at Appendix B.

5.0 WAY FORWARD

- 5.1 Those tenants involved in the Tenant Involvement structure have reviewed Helena's report and undertaken a day session on how to move forward. They have agreed that the existing structure is now too cumbersome and bureaucratic and does not represent good value for money. They therefore believe that a single tenant group supported by appropriate task and finish groups and tenant inspectors is the best way forward at this time. This new structure is shown at Appendix C.
- 5.2 Additionally the TRF has agreed to a new focus and will now meet only once or twice per year with other meetings as required and that the focus of the TRF should be on assisting with wider consultation and a broader community focus. The TRF will also undertake the impact assessment of the tenant involvement structure arrangements and will have more regularised links to the TRA's. This will mean the existing TRF constitution will be superseded by the new remit. The new remit for the TRF is shown at Appendix D.
- 5.3 The Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration already has delegated powers to support the TRF and TRA's and officers will continue to support these bodies in making the necessary changes.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 6.1 The continuing formalised involvement of tenants will add value to our community led improvements and link tenants directly into the shaping and scrutiny of our landlord services.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no additional financial or resource implications arising from this report as the current tenant involvement arrangements are funded through the HRA. The expected delivery of efficiencies in the streamlined arrangements will allow us to extend our current arrangements to encompass those harder to reach groups such as younger tenants and other poorly represented groups.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The new arrangements will mitigate the risk of adverse assessment by the housing regulator. The arrangements are also necessary to ensure we comply with the regulatory framework.
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Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

Appendix A - Existing Tenant involvement structure

Appendix B - Helena Review

Appendix C - Proposed new structure for Tenant involvement

Appendix D - New remit for the TRF

Appendix E – EIA

Appendix F – Minute of Landlord Services Committee 12 June 2013 (to follow)