

# APPENDIX F

## WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 7 SEPTEMBER 2009 EXECUTIVE – 3 NOVEMBER 2009

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#### Title:

**DEVELOPING AND WIDENING TENANT PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Keith Webster]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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#### Summary and purpose:

This report, which was considered by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 September, outlines the work that is beginning to strengthen the Council's approach to tenant/resident participation and involvement. At this stage, members are being invited to comment on the approach and make any observations or comments on this piece of work as it begins.

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#### How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

This report relates to two of the Council's Corporate Priorities namely: **Improving Lives** – Improving the quality of life for all, particularly the more vulnerable within our society; and **Subsidised affordable housing** – Working for more affordable housing to be built and managing council housing well.

#### Equality and Diversity Implications:

A robust involvement and participation mechanism will ensure that people who are not accustomed to being involved, or who feel they do not have the capacity, can be identified and supported to engage in tenant/resident participation. It is important Tenant Participation activities encompass 'hard to reach' groups and different approaches are used to attract to a wide range of people who have different interests and need different ways to become involved.

#### Resource/Value for Money implications:

Effective involvement and participation with tenants/residents can help establish clear priorities for investment and ensure that tenants are receiving what they believe to be 'value for money' in the services they receive. The costs of supporting Tenant Participation is contained within the HRA Revenue Budget.

#### Legal Implications:

There are none directly arising from this report.

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## Introduction

1. Over the years, the Council has offered a range of ways in which tenants can be involved or participate in decision-making about the services offered by Waverley as a landlord. This was codified in the 'Tenant Participation Compact', which was refreshed in 2007.
2. At present there is a suite of ways in which tenants can choose to get involved with Waverley. These include:
  - Mystery Shopping (introduced in 2009)
  - DIY Training with EPS (introduced in 2009)
  - Estate Walkabouts
  - Estate Monitors
  - Contract Monitoring Group
  - Surveys
  - Tenants Blog on the website
  - Void inspections of properties ready to be let
  - Reading Group
  - Consultation Group
  - Tenants Panel
    - Tenants Panel formal meetings
    - Landlord Services Partnership
    - Tenant representation on the Community O&S Committee
3. When the Council's landlord service was inspected by the Audit Commission in 2008 (which reported in January 2009), it concluded that the Council needed to do more work to widen tenant involvement and participation. In respect of tenant/resident involvement it recommended that the Council should be:
  - developing new methods of involvement to engage a wider range of residents in the management of their homes and ensuring that resident involvement structures are representative of the population; and
  - engaging tenants in mystery shopping exercises and quality checking empty properties.
4. In order to assist the Council with this task it has commissioned the Tenant Participation Advisory Service to undertake a review of current tenant involvement and make recommendations about how this service area can be strengthened. TPAS, which is nationally recognised for its work, will provide:
  - a robust review of existing tenant participation against the TPAS Accredited Landlord Standards with a report that highlights current strengths and weaknesses and includes a set of recommendations;
  - involve tenants and residents from local tenant groups and non-involved tenants in the review, in a variety of ways;

- provide feedback from all stakeholder groups on the impact of participation to date and their ideas on improvements for the future; and
  - identify good practice ideas and examples from their experience and information service.
5. Over the coming weeks TPAS will be working with tenants, leaseholders, the Tenants Panel, councillors, and staff to cover the following areas:

**Theme 1: The landlord demonstrates clear strategic commitment to resident involvement**

Reflecting on the extent to which the landlord has structured its resident involvement at a corporate level and seeks the views of its residents in setting its goals and aims.

**Theme 2: The landlord knows its residents and their aspirations**

Assessing just how well the organisation approaches the task of understanding its residents, the diversity of the residents they provide services to and the specific needs present.

A critical element of this theme examines how the landlord uses resident based information to set clear targets and appropriately allocate resources with reference to residents' views.

**Theme 3: The landlord has clear aims, measures and feeds-back outcomes**

Considering how clearly the landlord provides information about the aims of resident involvement and follows through with monitoring frameworks and systems for feedback.

**Theme 4: The landlord has a partnership ethos which delivers 'broader than housing outcomes'**

Examining the landlords approach to community cohesion and how well informed both staff and residents are about how effective links to strategic partnerships are organised and maintained.

**Theme 5: The landlord has effectively embedded resident involvement**

Evaluating the understanding of staff in regards to the role of resident involvement, the impact of resident involvement targets and the evidence of a positive resident involvement organisational culture.

**Theme 6: The landlord is committed to training, development and resource support for resident involvement**

Confirming the landlord's commitment to resident empowerment and involvement, including the resources available to develop the capacity of staff and residents.

**Theme 7: Residents are involved in the governance of the landlord**

Seeking out how the landlord has considered resident involvement in the political decision making process.

6. TPAS also provide a landlord accreditation scheme, which is recognised by the Audit Commission, Tenant Services Authority and Homes and Communities Agency. The work being undertaken by TPAS will help the Council shape its resident involvement approach so that it can work towards accreditation.

### **Conclusion**

7. Tenant involvement and participation is important to the service because it helps the Council:

- Become more accountable to residents;
- Drive up performance and run a better business; and
- Deliver better outcomes for local communities.

8. Members are invited to comment on the activity proposed and make any observations or suggestions about how the Council could work with its residents/tenants to involve them more in shaping the landlord service.

9. TPAS' recommendations to Waverley will be reported back to this committee and the Executive.

10. **Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee welcomed the continuation of estate walkabouts and considered that it would be helpful to members and tenants if the timings could be varied to include evenings and to invite the local community support officer to attend.

In the past members and tenants had been supported by a Waverley Tenants Participation Officer and the Committee agreed that a dedicated officer would be able to give advice and assistance in improving contact and encouraging more meetings.

The Committee noted the progress being made on the widening tenant involvement agenda and comments on the activity being undertaken by TPAS to help shape resident/tenant involvement.

The Committee agreed that the possibility of the Council employing a dedicated Tenant Participation Officer be actively explored and that the formation of the Weybourn and Heath End Tenant Association be welcomed.

### **Recommendation**

That the Executive endorse the comments of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Background Papers

Audit Commission Housing Inspection Report January 2009

<http://www.waverley.gov.uk/downloads/tenantparticipationcompact.pdf>

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