

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 JULY 2018

Title:

TENANT INVOLVEMENT PROGRESS REPORT

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr King]

[Wards Affected: All.]

Summary and purpose:

To provide the Committee with a progress report on the last year's tenant involvement activities and future plans for 2018/19.

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

This report sets out the tenant involvement actions which will contribute towards the Council's priorities of Customer Service, Community Wellbeing and Value for Money.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

The Housing Service welcomes the involvement and contribution of all tenants, and the offer of a range of opportunities to engage is aimed to encourage the involvement of as many as possible.

Financial Implications:

There is an annual budget for the Tenant Involvement service. All proposed activities will be met within this budget.

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Introduction

1. The Tenant Involvement service area continues to develop by seeking best practice, building on success and valuing all volunteers.
2. Tenant involvement is central to the Housing service working together to co-regulate the service to meet regulatory standards. The first Waverley Tenants Panel was formed in February 1995.
3. There are a range of ways to get involved. Tenant volunteers are offered three high level ways to engage with the service these are promoted through the Tenant Involvement Strategy [Tenant Involvement Strategy](#). There are further opportunities for all tenants to be engaged in open workshops, consultations and customer feedback through a variety of surveys.

4. The Tenants Panel, Scrutiny Group and Designated Persons volunteers are offered officer support and bespoke training to empower them in their roles with courses, online resources and awareness sessions. Each volunteer has an annual review to identify capacity, interests and training needs to support their role.
5. Waverley offers a range of in depth and ad hoc ways to get involved. During 2018/19 the Tenant Involvement Officer supported 141 activities ranging from Tenant Panel meetings, Waverley Tenant Scrutiny Group interviews and information gathering, Designated Person training, newsletters, consultations and events. The Tenant Involvement Officer designed and implemented impact assessment forms to identify the cost and outcomes of all activities.
6. From a desk top study of neighbouring local authorities and housing associations in the area Waverley tenants seem to have more opportunity to be directly involved and contribute to service improvements. With engaged tenants having direct access to the Head of Housing Operations and Portfolio Holder for Housing.
7. To develop the service further the Tenant Involvement Officer has attended a number of networking and training events held by Voluntary Action South West Surrey. This has helped to inform good practice and network with other agencies such as NHS CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group). Working with these organisations we now offer a comprehensive induction pack to welcome new volunteers and will look to be recognised with a national award such 'Investors in Volunteers'.

The Tenants Panel

8. The Tenants Panel continues to grow as a group and are actively engaged at all levels with the Housing service.
9. The Chair and Vice Chair met monthly with the Head of Housing Operations and Portfolio Holder for Housing during 2017/18 to discuss operational queries and strategic issues e.g. Housing Customer Service team, review of Sheltered Housing, Housing Strategy, digital inclusion and tenants newsletters.
10. The Tenants Panel Chair and members attended all the 2017 Housing Related Support consultation meetings at the eight Waverley schemes. Members provided support to vulnerable tenants and submitted a detailed report from their findings to the SCC Cabinet in September 2017. Their aim during 2018/19 will be to continue to visit and meet with residents at the eight Senior Living schemes to hear feedback on how the new service is operating.
11. Throughout the Tenancy Agreement review process Tenants Panel members' championed tenants views raising issues at Head of Service meetings and Housing O & S Committee. They also invited officers to present at the Tenants Panel AGM and All Tenants Open Meeting (ATOM).
12. The Tenants Panel Chair is part of the Housing O & S design sub committee helping to give a tenants perspective on design within Waverley's new builds.
13. The Tenants Panel have an independent website [Waverley Tenants Panel | Committed to Tenants & Tenants Views](#). During the last year the website has

received 6,868 visits. These figures have shown a notable rise when postings focus on particular housing issues such as the tenancy agreement review.

Waverley Tenants Scrutiny Group

14. Following a Tenant Member Officer Project Group the Tenants Scrutiny Group was established in December 2013.
15. During the 2017/18 period the Waverley Scrutiny group have conducted two Housing Service reviews focussing on voids and recharges. The findings, recommendations and landlord response have been presented to the Housing O & S Committee, July 2017 and March 2018
16. The service have accepted the majority of recommendations leading to review service area processes, promoting best practice, increasing customer satisfaction and delivering value for money.
17. The group receive officer support but no longer require external support which has made a saving on their budget. With the assistance of the Tenant Involvement Officer they have also created a peer challenge relationship with Paragon Housing Association.
18. The next review will be focussing on the mutual exchange process investigating tenant communication and promoting downsizing. This report will be presented to committee in autumn 2018.

Designated Persons Panel

19. As part of the corporate complaints process for Housing and recognised by the Housing Ombudsman the Designated Persons Panel are a conduit for tenants when their complaint has reached the final stage of the Waverley complaints process. The Panel consider both sides of the case and aim to recommend a local solution rather than refer to the Housing Ombudsman.
20. Consisting of four members the group meet when a case is referred and quarterly to review Ombudsman cases, customer feedback and good practice.
21. The Panel have reviewed six complaints since 2013. Recommendations by the Panel from all of these cases have been agreed by Waverley and the complainant.
22. The Panel will monitor the impact of the change in Corporate Complaints Policy to consider if complaints are comprehensively investigated and responded to. They will also note any trends regarding complaints.

Forward Plans for 2018/19

23. During August 2018 the service will hold four family STARⁱ social events. These activities will provide an informal forum for tenants to feedback on service delivery areas such as quality of home, communal spaces and customer services. There will also be drop in workshops on digital and financial inclusion.

24. In April 2018 the partnership meetings with the Tenants Panel. Head of Service and Portfolio Holder of Housing were reviewed to include all Tenant Panel members. The purpose of the bi-monthly meetings are for the Tenants Panel to support and advise the Head of Housing and Portfolio Holder and for the Panel to receive support for their activities and development.
25. Using data from the STAR survey a review will be undertaken regarding tenant involvement and Tenant Panel communications. This work will provide a platform on which to base the 2019/22 Tenant Involvement Strategy, promote the service and encourage others to become volunteers.
26. Develop and build further network opportunities to compare and share good practice. Although many local housing providers are associations there is an opportunity to work with other housing providers such as Croydon Council and Paragon HA.
27. Raise profile of Waverley TI work through HQN (Housing Quality Network), Tpas -the tenant engagement experts and the Chartered Institute of Housing. This will be achieved by applying for national awards and sharing case studies.

Conclusion

28. The Tenant Involvement service has enabled both the Tenants Panel and Waverley Scrutiny Group to be more empowered and confident. This has been highlighted by their successes noted in this report.
29. During 2018/19 the service will review its communication and seek further recognition with national organisations. This work will also help to inform the 2019 Tenant Involvement Strategy.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. notes the Tenant Involvement achievements and support the actions for 2018/19; and
2. acknowledges and thanks those tenants who volunteer for the Housing Service.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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