

TENANTS' FORUM	Agenda Item
Thursday 9 th November 2017	5ii

Tenant Involvement - Update

This report provides the Tenants Forum with an update on Tenant Involvement activities undertaken since May 2017.

INTRODUCTION

Tenant Involvement is important so that tenants and leaseholders have an opportunity to shape and influence the service they receive.

The Housing service unit recruited a new Tenant Engagement Officer in May 2017. This report provides an update of work undertaken by Kettering Borough Council Housing Services to facilitate tenant involvement and an update of some of the work planned for the next 12 months.

TENANT INVOLVEMENT

Tenant Involvement in Kettering has a long history and is well established with a variety of options for tenants and leaseholders to engage with the housing service.

The Tenant Engagement Officer role was named 'Housing Communications Officer' prior to May 2017. The job title was changed to reflect greater emphasis being given to engaging with local communities. The officer recruited to the new role has a wealth of experience of estate based community working and the hope is that as a result new work would be developed which widens the scope for tenants and leaseholders to get involved, with a greater menu of options for them to do so.

Tenant Involvement nationally has also been given greater prominence following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in London.

In Kettering, we believe that it is important to;

- Inform tenants about issues that affect them and their tenancies
- Develop a two way dialogue with tenants, prospective tenants, leaseholders and other stakeholders

- Give tenants opportunities to get involved in and influence decisions on matters that affect them

We have also considered wider strategies when planning work. The TPAS National Tenant Engagement Standards and HCA standards set out guidelines and recommendations such as;

- **Building the right foundations** – linking involvement to governance and core objectives
- **Resources** – allocating sufficient resources and reviewing regularly
- **Gathering, using and providing the right information** – new technologies used appropriately and approach linked to digital inclusion strategy
- **Influence and scrutiny** – tenants able to hold landlord to account and influence policy, standards, decisions and performance indicators
- **Community Engagement** – working with communities to understand the issues they feel are priorities and find solutions. Empowering communities to develop their capacity and supporting initiatives that lead to improved community cohesion
- **Customer service, choice and complaints** – providing information, choices and communication that is appropriate and clear with an accessible approach to complaints
- **Understanding and responding to diverse needs** – treating tenants with fairness and respect, understanding and meeting different needs

WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO

We currently communicate with, consult and involve tenants via a number of different methods. Some of these are listed below;

- **Tenants Forum**- Joint committee of tenants, leaseholders, officers and councillors, meets monthly
- **Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel (TOSP)** – tenants panel who monitor rental income, arrears, voids, homelessness and general performance as well as conducting in depth reviews
- **Estate walkabouts** – officers, councillors and tenants
- **Face to face meetings** (meet and greet sessions) – finding out local issues
- **Connect** – quarterly newsletter with tenant involvement on Editorial Panel
- **General letters** – information letters on various matters sent from time to time plus regular rent letters/statements
- **Posters/flyers/booklets/leaflets** – advice on specific services or issues
- **Website**- general information and advice
- **Staff/contractor recruitment** – tenant involved in process

In addition, a wide range of information is provided to customers including;

- **Tenant Starter pack** – comprehensive information for all new tenants
- **Welcome Meetings** – mandatory for all new tenants prior to sign up
- **Notice boards in blocks** – containing range of up to date information

UPDATE

The Tenant Engagement Officer has developed some new areas of work since being in post as well as supporting existing work;

- Highfield Cleaning Programme
- 2017 Garden Competition
- Environmental Working Group
- Holyoake Court Meet and Greet
- Connect newsletter
- Current TOSP review
- Kettering Carnival
- New Building Clean up Day
- Hampden Crescent Meet and Greet
- Tenant Involvement Database

Future Work Plans

Future work will include;

- Developing an action plan and strategy in conjunction with TPAS and TOSP
- Developing a digital / communications strategy to help us engage with wider range of tenants
- Financial Inclusion – providing access to multi agency support
- Digital Inclusion – ensuring access to digital support for UC
- Welfare Reform / UC roadshow – multi agency support and advice on rollout in 2018

The Tenant Engagement Officer will deliver a presentation giving more details of work undertaken to date and future work plans at the Forum.

Tenants Forum will receive regular updates on progress in developing and implementing the work programme for Tenant Involvement.

Tracey Copeland / Leona Mantle
Tenancy Services
9 November 2017