



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 13TH MARCH 2014

SUBJECT: HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG) with information on the introduction and operation of the Housing Improvement Partnership (HIP) – the ‘Caerphilly approach’.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Local Tenant Participation Strategy (approved in May 2013) has 4 key objectives and the development of tenant scrutiny is identified in Objective 2. Tenant scrutiny can be a valuable mechanism to support service improvement. It should assist a housing service with understanding what matters to tenants. The Tenant & Community Involvement Team has worked with an independent consultant – Central Consultancy to develop an approach that is right for Caerphilly Homes and its tenants.
- 2.2 The Caerphilly Homes approach will be delivered through a Housing Improvement Partnership (HIP) that will consist of up to 15 tenants. The HIP will be independent of established tenant participation structures to maintain the autonomy of the process. The HIP will use evidence of real service delivery to examine the delivery of those services by Caerphilly Homes and challenge us to improve the way in which services are provided. The focus of the process will be on the “tenant experience”. This will be achieved through a structured methodology that enables the HIP to use evidence to capture “what really matters to tenants”. Our approach is designed to align with the principles of the Regulatory Framework that focuses on service delivery outcomes. It will also support the Council wide drive for continuous improvement and value for money.
- 2.3 The outputs generated by our HIP process will be Tenant Service ‘Handbooks’. A ‘handbook’ will be produced for each service delivery activity that is examined by the HIP. The ‘handbooks’ will set out the key outcomes that our tenants expect from each service request.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Tenant involvement most closely links with the current Local Housing Strategy aim of:

“providing good quality, well managed homes in communities where people want to live and offer people housing choices which meets their needs and aspirations” Local Housing Strategy 2008-13, Aim 6:

- 3.2 The National Housing Strategy 2010 ‘Improving Lives and Communities’ emphasises the need to:

“Give tenants a clear voice in decisions that affect them” and that

“Services should reflect the needs of those who use them, not the needs of the organisations that deliver them”

- 3.3 In terms of the Local Tenant Participation Strategy, tenant scrutiny is identified as Key Objective 2:

To develop tenant scrutiny to improve services.

- 3.4 Corporately, the Housing Improvement Partnership and tenant involvement in general will also link to the Council’s Public Engagement Strategy, the Council’s Strategic Equality Objectives 3 and 4, and also to themes in “Caerphilly Delivers”, the Local Service Board single integrated plan.

4. THE REPORT

Local Tenant Participation Strategy

- 4.1 Careful consideration has been given to the right approach to our project in order to address the aims of the LTPS, avoid the creation of a rigid and complicated process and duplication of roles. The chosen approach must also reflect the needs of the Council, our current position in relation to tenant participation and our service improvement activities. The HIP framework needs to produce outcomes that will add value to our services and in order to deliver this we need to be realistic about what can be achieved.
- 4.2 A review of tenant participation activities by Central Consultancy in 2012/13 (as part of developing our new LTPS) identified that our existing tenant participation structure was very formal with engagement taking place through formal work groups. Central Consultancy advised that experience elsewhere demonstrated that informal methods and interest groups increase participation. In order to address this (and increase tenant engagement), our updated LTPS focuses on developing new, more informal mechanisms to capture tenant views and encourage further involvement. Our methodology has been designed to take this into account. It also borrows from the principles of the Welsh Government Delivery outcomes (for self-assessment) and the principles of Results Based Accounting to ensure that our tenant scrutiny is in line with outcomes and experiences of tenants.

The Caerphilly approach

- 4.3 The Caerphilly approach is one that challenges tenants to work with Caerphilly Homes to improve services, whilst being a straight-forward, effective and achievable process. A Housing Improvement Partnership (HIP) will be set-up to achieve this. There needs to be an emphasis on “tenant touch points” which are “requesting a service” and “receiving a service” and the outputs of scrutiny will focus on this. A very effective technique to capture this is through a Customer journey mapping process. This involves studying all interactions from the moment a tenant requests a service – by writing down the words used by the tenants and words used by the officer responding. This is in effect a “journey map” - it is what happened and therefore the outcomes will be based on real evidence. The evidence will be real service requests, enabling the HIP to take into account the views and experiences of the wider body of tenants. See paper; The Caerphilly approach (attached as Appendix 1).
- 4.4 The ‘handbook’ will be a framework that will ensure that the work of the HIP adds value to our service improvement activities. The ‘handbooks’ will use evidence of real service delivery to help Caerphilly Homes ensure that our service delivery activities are designed to deliver what really matters to our tenants. Each Tenant Service Handbook will define the outcomes expected by our tenants from each service request and will help us design our services to be efficient and more tenant focussed (an illustrative example of a tenant ‘handbook’ can be found in Appendix 2).

- 4.5 The HIP will receive administration and support from the Tenant & Community Involvement Team (T&CI Team) and additional guidance, mentoring and training will be provided by an independent consultant during the early stages of the HIP's activities. HIP sessions will be structured and facilitated by the consultant to assist the HIP to draw out the information and outcomes that are important and to enable the group to produce a 'handbook' that is totally focused from the customer (tenant) experience (see Appendix 3 for example of tenant handbook sessions).
- 4.6 In line with other aims within the LTPS, the HIP will be a more informal group and all appropriate guidance documents covering Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct, Membership and recruitment process will be developed with the assistance of the consultant. A pilot will take place which will enable Caerphilly Homes and the HIP to test and review the methodology of the approach.
- 4.7 Good practice research highlights the need for these groups to be independent. It is important to protect the integrity of the HIP and future activities could raise conflicts of interest for those tenants who have been involved in the subject being examined. It is therefore essential that the tenant members of the HIP be independent of any other tenant participation activities. This is supported by Central Consultancy.
- 4.8 Our HIP approach is designed to support current service improvement activities and not to duplicate existing tenant participation or officer activities. The approach is focussed and will produce real outputs that will add value to the services we provide. The work of the HIP will be used by Caerphilly Homes to inform service improvements. It is important that the process is undertaken with a spirit of partnership. The HIP will not replace existing decision-making protocols but the outputs produced through the HIP will inform service improvement decision-making.

Outline Implementation Timetable

Task	Date
Develop framework for HIP including Terms of Reference and the scope of HIP	Completed
Develop recruitment methods	Jan – March 2014
Recruit members to HIP	April 2014
Identify training needs and devise plan and timetable	April – Nov 2014
Implement pilot review	July – Sept 2014
Review pilot process	Oct 2014
Plan further service areas	Nov 2014

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes only so the Council's full Equality Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied.
- 5.2 The HIP is identified within the Local Tenant Participation Strategy (LTPS) and therefore the EQI Assessment completed as part of the LTPS will include this activity. Also, the National Housing Strategy 2010 (extract shown in 3.4) demonstrates the need to ensure that all tenants are allowed a voice and have their individual needs taken into account, regardless of their individual circumstances and backgrounds.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are one-off costs associated with the initial setting up the HIP and on going resourcing of its work (including consultancy costs for independent support) but this can be accommodated within the existing Tenant Participation budget.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications. The HIP will be supported through the Tenant & Community Involvement Team.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 All views following consultation have been incorporated within the report. The Tenant Information Exchange will receive a presentation on the HIP.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members of the CHTG to note the introduction of the Housing Improvement Partnership.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To inform members of the current position.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government and Housing Acts.

Author: Elizabeth Bayliss – Tenant Participation Officer (Tenant & Community Involvement Team), Tel: 01495 235011, baylie@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Councillor Gerald Jones, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing
Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer
Phil Davy, Head of Programmes
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services
Graham North, Public Sector Housing Manager
Mandy Betts, Tenant & Community Involvement Manager
Gail Taylor, Tenant Participation Officer
David A. Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language)
Gayna Jones – Central Consultancy
Kelsey Watkins – Communication & Tenant Engagement Officer

Background Papers: Local Tenant Participation Strategy

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 The Housing Improvement Partnership – the Caerphilly approach
Appendix 2 Illustrative example of a Tenant 'handbook'
Appendix 3 Tenant handbook sessions