



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 13TH MARCH 2014

SUBJECT: PILOT SCHEME - ESTATE WALKABOUTS

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This is an information report on the introduction of Estate Walkabouts as referred to in the Local Tenant Participation Strategy.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report outlines the introduction of Estate Walkabouts as part of a pilot scheme to encourage wider tenant involvement in the Housing service.

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, Associations link most closely with

Objective 3; increasing tenant and resident engagement through a new structure.

- 3.4 Further links include the Council’s Public Engagement Strategy, ‘Caerphilly Delivers – the LSB single integrated plan, and also Objectives 3 and 4 of the Council’s Strategic Equality Plan 2012.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Background

For clarity Estate Management Officers currently undertake regular inspections of the patches they manage for checking individual gardens and the general condition of the housing estate.

It is not intended that the estate walkabouts will replace this exercise but it is envisaged that the information gathered may be of assistance to the Estate Management Officers in setting priorities for their areas. This should not provide an opportunity for residents to complain about other individuals or to discuss repairs undertaken to their own home.

Estate walkabouts provide an opportunity for local residents and Council Officers to work together in order to identify specific areas and priorities for improvements on their estates. The aim of the Estate Walkabouts would be to focus on a variety of issues that could affect everyone living in the area. For example this could include fly tipping, estate management issues, dog fouling and parking issues. The estate walkabout would involve residents and officers actually walking a set route together and making a list of any issues that they observe that may look unsightly or cause concern. A list would be compiled of all the issues identified during the estate walkabout and an action plan would then be devised in order to identify who has responsibility for ensuring that the appropriate action is taken subject to availability of funds and resources. Any works listed that require additional financial resources would need to be covered from within existing budgets or by future improvement schemes if budget provision could be made. This information would need to be made clear at the start of the process in order to manage expectations.

It is envisaged that the pilot exercise will commence in April 2014 and if successful further estates will be included as part of a rolling programme.

4.2 Purpose

To show a clear commitment to working in partnership with communities to address the local issues that they may have and to provide more targeted services. Estate Walkabouts offer an opportunity for Officers and residents to have open and honest conversations about what is achievable on individual estates. Also this scheme has the potential to increase opportunities for wider tenant participation in the running of the housing service and encourage a customer-focussed culture.

4.3 Outcomes

Some of the outcomes that may be achieved as a result of the pilot exercise are as follows:

- i. Increased links with Tenant and Resident Associations
- ii. Method of encouraging housing staff from different teams to work together
- iii. Creates partnership working between different departments
- iv. Target action to areas that are of most concern to the community
- v. Visible presence of staff on estates
- vi. Encourage wider tenant participation in other activities organised by the Council or other partner organisations.

In addition this exercise also provides the opportunity to identify potential improvement projects for consideration in the future.

There is also the option of undertaking focus groups; drop in sessions on the estate as a follow up exercise for issues raised as part of the estate walkabout if deemed necessary.

4.4 Resources

The pilot exercise will initially be co-ordinated by the Tenant & Community Involvement Team. It is intended that the pilot scheme will initially cover three specific areas of the Lansbury Park Estate. The Lansbury Park Neighbourhood Housing Manager has agreed to assist with the pilot. Other Officers that could be involved when the pilot has been fully developed are as follows; Estate Management Officers, Surveyors, Tenant Liaison Officer, Communities First Officer, Highway Inspector, Dog warden, Tenancy Enforcement Officer. Other interested parties may be Grounds Maintenance, local Councillors and the Police.

It is anticipated that each walkabout session will last approximately 1 hour. The pilot scheme would be advertised on the Housing Website and Face book page. In addition a specific invitation to attend the session will be sent to the residents of the three areas on the Lansbury Park estate that have been selected for the pilot exercise.

It is intended that any action taken as a result of the estate walkabout would be publicised using an informal format of 'you said' 'we did'. This will then be circulated to the residents who took part and publicised in the newsletter and online.

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 National Housing Strategy 2010 extract shown in 3.4 however 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.
- 5.3 In the case of Estates Walkabout, this means that exercises of this nature must involve a range of tenants in order to ensure that matters relating to age and disability in all its forms are covered. What may not be apparent to one person on an Estate Walkabout might be the most vital issue for someone else, who has different physical requirements.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are minor financial implications for the pilot exercise; the existing budget has an allocation for Tenant Participation activities and the cost of this pilot can be met from that. However as part of the pilot exercise consideration will be given to the financial implications if the estate walkabouts are developed on a wider scale.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are minor personnel implications for the pilot exercise. However as part of the pilot exercise consideration will be given to the personnel implications if the estate walkabouts are developed on a wider scale.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Comments from consultees have been incorporated within this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To inform members of the planned pilot scheme which is in accordance with the Local Tenant Participation Strategy.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government and Housing Acts.

Author: Gail Taylor, Tenant Participation Officer
(01495 235557 – E.mail: taylog1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Consultees: Councillor Gerald Jones, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services
Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer
Phil Davy, Head of Programmes
Graham North, Public Sector Housing Manager
Mandy Betts, Tenant and Community Involvement Manager
Elizabeth Bayliss, Tenant Participation Officer
Debbie Bishop, Upper Rhymney Area Housing Manager
Karen James, Lansbury Park Neighbourhood Housing Manager
Julie Reynolds, Eastern Valley Area Housing Manager
Angela Hiscox, Graig Y Rhacca Neighbourhood Housing Manager
David A. Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language)
Jane Roberts-Waite, Strategic Co-ordination Manager
Kelsey Watkins, Communications & Tenant Engagement Officer
Paul Smythe, Housing Repairs Operation Manager
Tina McMahon, Community Regeneration Manager
Rachel Thornett, Tenancy Enforcement Manager
Cllr Christine Forehead
Cllr Elaine Forehead
Cllr Barbara Jones
Tony White, Waste Strategy and Operations Manager
Marcus Lloyd, Highway Operations Group Manager
Lyndon Ross, Senior Environmental Health Officer

Background Papers: Local Tenant Participation Strategy