



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP - 5TH DECEMBER 2013

SUBJECT: TENANTS' AND RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This is an information report to give an update on the Tenants' and Residents' Associations that are recognised by the Housing Department for consultation and/or funding purposes.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Report outlines the recognition criteria, funding formula and current status of recognised Tenants' and Residents' Associations.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Tenant involvement most closely links with the current Local Housing Strategy aim of
- 3.2 *"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
- 3.3 The National Housing Strategy 2010 'Improving Lives and Communities' emphasises the need to
- 3.4 *"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"*
- 3.5 In terms of the Local Tenant Participation Strategy, Associations link most closely with
- 3.6 *Objective 3; increasing tenant and resident engagement through a new structure.*
- Associations are at the community based level of that structure.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 There are more community and resident groups in the Borough than those subject to this report. This report focuses on Associations that have actively sought funding and /or recognition for consultation purposes, from the Housing Department. Any funding is paid from the Housing Revenue Account and has a specific purpose; to assist with the running costs of the organisation. To qualify for funding an Association must meet certain criteria and include specific information in its constitution (See Appendix 1). If an Association meets the criteria;

recognition is granted by Officers under delegated powers and an information report is prepared for Members. Members are also advised when an Association is established in their ward.

- 4.2 Associations were often established to deal with particular issues related to the housing service. Some were established as part of initiatives such as the Priority Estates Project. Over time, as tenures have changed with initiatives such as the Right to Buy, those issues have often become community issues rather than purely social housing issues.
- 4.3 Between 1996 and 2012 the number of recognised Associations remained relatively stable at around 15 at any one time. However the range of activity of each of these organisations has varied. Some have wide ranging purposes and actively engage with other community organisations such as the Community First Partnerships, others have had a narrower focus and their activities have been dependent on the number of volunteers available to run the organisation. Many have relied on a small but very dedicated band of officers and committee members.
- 4.4 The Local Tenant Participation Strategy approved by Task Group in May 2013 highlighted the need to widen the range of opportunities for participation. However, there is still a place for Associations within that range. While Associations may be viewed as a very traditional method of engagement, they offer a grass roots level of community participation and some are very well established in their communities. Two of the longest standing Associations are in Phillipstown and Panside.

During 2013 Participation Officers have met with Associations to review levels of activity and the support required; one Association has taken the decision to dissolve, (Risca and District). Two new Associations have established in Fochriw and Lower Panside, while support is currently being given to revive the former Graig Y Rhacca group. Support is also available from the Tenant and Community Involvement Team to advise on issues such as constitutions, funding, AGM's and contact with the housing service. One Association currently holds quarterly meetings facilitated by a Participation Officer and involving representatives from the local housing office, other community groups and local ward officers from the police. This model has also been used in other areas in the past and is available to other Associations. Appendix 2 gives the full list of Associations and their current status.

- 4.5 Funding is calculated on a formula basis of a start up grant of £100 or £1 per Council property for a new Association (whichever is the greater) and then an annual grant based on £3.40 per Council property within the area the Association represents. Funding (or recognition) would not be granted to two Associations covering the same area. Annual grants currently range from £250 to £1,900 per Association. Associations have to submit annual audited accounts to the Tenant and Community Involvement team before the next year's grant is paid.
- 4.6 The formula has been reviewed twice; the first time after consultation with the Tenants' Forum, representatives were happy to leave it at the same rate. A more extensive consultation with Associations took place just prior to the housing stock transfer process; at that time a move was considered to provision of a lower, flat rate, annual grant to each Association with a central allocation that Associations could bid into for specific projects. Due to the imminent ballot consultation process this was put on hold but the matter will be subject to further consultation.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes only, so the Council's Equality Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied, however the National Housing Strategy 2010 extracts shown in 3.4 previously, demonstrate 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 no financial implications, the existing budget has an allocation for Association funding.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Participation Officers have visited Associations during the past six months and part of the visit was to assess any support required and to take forward any suggestions for improving communication both between Associations and between Associations and Housing Officers.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the current status of the Associations recognised for funding and/or consultation purposes.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To inform members of the current position.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government and Housing Acts. This is a Cabinet Sub Committee function.

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Background Papers:
Local Tenant Participation Strategy

Appendices:
Appendix 1 of 2 Recognition Criteria
Appendix 2 of 2 Status of Associations