

Issues raised by Caerphilly Homes Task Group concerning introduction of Housing Improvement Partnership – 30 April 2014.

Duplication

- *Tenants viewed the proposal as a duplication of effort given the remit of the established CSIMs.*
- *Pilot should be moved forward through the CSIMs rather than the HIP.*

Tenants confirmed that they still felt this way and that it was an adequate reflection of their view contained in the minutes of the CHTG meeting on 13 March 2014.

Additional queries/points

- Clearer understanding of the process of the HIP and how it would work in practice and what it would achieve?

The work of the HIP is different to that of the CSIMS and it will complement the work of the CSIMS - not duplicate it. The HIP will be a long standing Task & Finish group that will undertake a series of tasks but it will identify and work on one area before moving to another. The role of the HIP will be very specific – listening to tenant's service demands and identifying what the service should do based on what tenants want.

It will receive information in the form of transcripts of telephone calls or written communication such as e-mails or letters. It will follow the workflow of real service requests to understand what really happens when a tenant requests a service. The HIP will not rely on their own experiences but the experiences of tenants requesting that particular service (therefore capturing the views of a wider population). The HIP will be able to build up a real picture of actual service delivery. It will then pull together the key points being asked for by tenants to complete its report (handbook) – see example in appendix 2 of CHTG report in March.

The independent facilitator will support the HIP in this work and help them tease out the important issues to tenants. See appendix 3 for outline of HIP sessions.

- Clarification on two groups – HIP and CSIMS (do they need to be separate?)

Yes, there does need to be two separate groups. The HIP and CSIMS are two different projects with two different methodologies that produce two different outcomes. The role of the CSIMs is to 'test' out already set-down practices and standards already in place (currently this is in the form of surveys but could include other methods in the future), whereas the role of the HIP will be to identify the elements of service that are important to tenants - the HIP will

not measure satisfaction or performance but what tenants value from a service based on evidence. These are two completely different activities.

The role of HIP is to identify what elements of the service are important to tenants. The HIP may from time to time look at services which CSIMs are involved with but their work will not duplicate that of CSIMs but will instead be complementary.

For example, the HIP may produce a recommendation from listening to tenants who make a complaint that may identify what is of value to tenants is that “my complaint is impartially reviewed”, this could be accompanied by a proposal that the measure is “was my complaint handled impartially”. It will not be the role of the HIP to measure the performance against that measure. This will be the responsibility of Caerphilly Homes who may work with CSIMs to undertake and analyse the performance.

The LTPS has a clear objective to involve more tenants and the HIP is one of the activities to assist with this objective. The HIP is an additional tenant participation activity that has been designed to make tenant involvement and our service improvement techniques stronger. The HIP is designed to support current service improvement activities and not duplicate existing tenant participation or officer activities. It will supplement our existing work because we are all committed to our shared goal to improve housing services through increased involvement.

- What would the HIP achieve that was different to CSIMs now and the future activities of the CSIMs e.g. when CSIMs look at service improvement in other areas e.g. allocations.

The HIP and CSIMs may look at similar areas of the housing services but the roles are different - as described above.

- How can the Council have a programme for the HIP to keep them busy if the Council can't currently keep the CSIMs busy?

It is not relevant to compare this as these are two separate activities and therefore the work programmes will be different. The HIP work programme will be set in consultation with HIP members on a timescale to achieve its task. The main role of tenant participation is to deliver service improvement and we don't want to create work to keep people busy in any tenant participation activity that doesn't work towards service improvements.

- When will the HIP start and what would happen if the Council don't get the numbers wanting to participate in HIP?

An outline implementation timetable for the HIP was included in the CHTG report. The dates will need to be amended as a result of the delay but the

timeframes previously stated remain unchanged – approximately 4 months for recruitment and initial training. It is Caerphilly Homes' responsibility to recruit. We have an outline plan for recruiting and delivering the project. If there are teething troubles, the project will be amended accordingly.

- Why was HIP not looked at as part of the CSIMS? Feel that the HIP was originally what the CSIMS was going to be called – which adds to concerns of duplication.

This is an additional activity to enhance tenant participation within Caerphilly Homes and designed to complement all other activities. There may have been confusion due to the plan to expand CSIMS activity into other service areas and not just WHQS. The LTPS identifies the overarching structure for the future of tenant participation in Caerphilly Homes and certain groups/activities were highlighted as part of that structure. The HIP and CSIMs are clearly listed as separate groups within the LTPS. The LTPS was presented to the TIE and endorsed by the CHTG.

See above for response to duplication.

Consultation

- ***Lack of consultation with tenants on the proposal***

A question was asked by staff on where the tenant members saw a lack of consultation? Tenants responded by saying they felt the project should have been discussed first with involved tenants - the established groups and the TIE - gather their thoughts and feelings.

Additional queries/Points

- All participation activities should be run past the TIE before being taken forward.

The HIP proposal was initially submitted to Project Board, where it was decided that a report would be submitted to CHTG prior to presentation to TIE. In addition, no other working groups or projects have been taken to our involved tenants (TIE) prior to inception. There was no consultation on the detail of the Older Persons or R&I Working Groups other than these were the two areas identified by involved tenants as a priority following the no vote.

Once set-up, each group worked with officers on devising its own Terms of Reference, Code of conduct, training and even membership. The same applies to the CSIMS project, which was suggested by the R&I group and was taken forward by tenants and officers involved in the R&I group only.

Therefore, the Council believes that the processes involved in setting up the HIP are no different to the way other working groups currently in place were set up. In fact, the HIP has gone further by consulting with the CHTG; neither of the existing working groups were discussed at CHTG prior to inception. In addition, as with the current working groups, members of the HIP will be the appropriate tenants to comment on the development of the group.

- Tenant members stated they felt out of the loop with Tenant participation. When Mandy stopped attending the R&I Working group, they were told she was busy so she couldn't provide the support. Now it has been realised that the TACI team were working on the HIP project. Felt HIP project was very secretive and was developed at the expense of the R&I Group.

Officers are working to deliver the LTPS priorities that have been agreed in consultation with tenants. It is not a secretive project. The LTPS was agreed and the work to deliver it is what we are undertaking. Caerphilly Homes has a responsibility to prioritise its workload and officers have to make decisions based on those priorities to deliver all of the LTPS and this project is part of it. The TACI Team will use the most appropriate methods to support all tenant participation activities.

- Feel that Council officers have taken own views on the project and not asked the tenants for their perspective.

Caerphilly Homes has a responsibility to develop tenant participation.

The HIP project was developed in order to address the commitment made in the LTPS. Tenants from the TIE and Tenants & Residents Associations were involved in shaping the Local Tenant Participation Strategy of which the HIP and CSIMs were identified. Once recruited, there will be further consultation with the tenant members of the HIP on its role, Terms of Reference, work programme etc. which is the detail.

In general, information reports on progress of all tenant participation activities (through the LTPS), will be submitted to CHTG.

Independence

- ***Tenants refuted that existing representatives could not retain independence (when assessing service contacts) if on the HIP.***

Tenants confirmed this was still the view and when asked they stated they still felt this way even after information that TPAS Cymru and Central Consultancy supported independence as best practice.

To undertake the HIP role effectively it is vital that the tenants involved are completely independent of any other tenant participation activities. This would include involvement in the Housing Task group and working groups currently in operation. In line with good practice, independence is key to effective scrutiny. HIP members would not be able to join other groups either.

An example given by the tenant representatives previously mentioned allocations. If the same tenants were involved in a group that looked at allocations e.g.; the Common Housing Register and the HIP, how can the tenant(s) on the HIP challenge themselves when they have made a previous decision that now conflicts with another finding? It's about a 'fresh pair of eyes'.

As well as the reasons outlined above, independence is also vital in order to protect the integrity of the HIP members and housing and facilitate a transparent and independent scrutiny process. It is not the intention to exclude our core group of tenants from being involved in the HIP but it may be that a decision would need to be taken by an individual to resign membership of current group(s) in order to be involved in the HIP. Also, existing tenants (by others) can be viewed as having a conflict of interest.

Additional queries/points

- What will the HIPs training cover?

The HIP will use their skills as tenants (consumers) to produce its report (currently called the 'handbook') and help us improve the services we provide. Our approach does not require the HIP members to have the knowledge or skills of officers but instead to utilise the skills they already have as tenants to help us define what the service should be achieving.

HIP members will require support to structure their work, manage their programme and produce their reports. Training should be focused on understanding their role on the HIP and working well in a team. Training will therefore cover areas such as:

- How groups work
- Equality & diversity
- Role of group – Terms of Reference
- Code of Conduct

- Tenants said they didn't understand why the HIP needed to be independent and why participation in other groups would cause a conflict of interest?

See responses above.

Reporting mechanisms

- ***Clarification over HIP reporting mechanism and whether its recommendations would take preference over CSIMs.***

Tenants asked for reassurance that it wouldn't and an explanation of the reporting routes for HIP & CSIMs.

The setting up of the HIP will not alter the governance/reporting arrangements within the Council. The HIP will produce reports that will be advisory in nature and these will be submitted to Public Sector Housing Management meetings (or appropriate Head of Service) for discussion. The work of the HIP will produce evidence and this evidence will be used by the decision-making structures within Caerphilly Homes. Any subsequent adopted recommendations will then be referred to the CHTG through an information report.

CSIMs currently report to the Repairs & Improvement Group only, although the new Terms of Reference for the CSIMs identifies an annual update will be sent to the CHTG and when CSIMs begin to look at other service areas, reports can be submitted through the most appropriate reporting routes (which may include officers, working groups etc).

The work of the CSIMs & the HIP (as with other groups) will be separate activities and the reporting routes are separate. The Council can reassure tenants that as a professional organisation it would not make decisions based on 'preferences'.

Additional queries/points

- Thought HIP was independent so why would the CSIMs feed into the HIP (and vice versa)?

Tenant scrutiny (or any other activity/group) should not duplicate the work of officers. The HIP is not a decision making body and it is vital that it remains independent. To this end, the HIP would not 'feed' anything to the CSIMs or vice versa. CSIMs could assist the work of the HIP by surveying tenants once they have received a service. They would be able to provide information at a later stage by surveying a service (where standards may have changed or new standards introduced as a result of HIP scrutiny) to ensure that those important issues to tenants are being met.

The HIP could receive a report on how well its recommendations are being implemented and if failing, it would be the responsibility of Officers and existing structures such as the Caerphilly Homes Task group to put in place mechanisms to ensure that what the HIP recommended happens on the ground.

- Concerns were raised about the structure diagram in the LTPS – the level at where activities were placed.

The overall LTPS structure was agreed by the CHTG. Activities are subject to review and the structure currently reflects the objectives of the LTPS to strengthen tenant participation.

Pilot Timescale

- ***Concerns that new tenants could find the initial process intimidating and given that HIP is a one-year pilot, it would not give them enough time to properly take on board the training and become confident in their role. Analysis and outcomes generated might not accurately reflect what was happening.***

Tenants confirmed this was still their view.

Recruitment to the HIP will be for a two-year period. The pilot will run for up to a year and if necessary, the process will be adjusted. This one-year pilot allows time for recruitment, training and scrutiny of a service area.

As previously stated, the HIP members will use their skills as tenants to produce its report(s). The HIP approach doesn't require tenants to have knowledge or skills of officers but use the skills they already have as tenants. The role of the HIP is very different to our existing tenant participation activities. In the same way as with the other groups we have set up, the HIP members will be supported during their learning process.

With regard to the statements that "outcomes generated may not accurately reflect what was happening" - Information/recommendations produced by the HIP will not be the views of the HIP tenants but an understanding of what other tenants are saying (evidence) based on its work.

Additional queries/points

- A lot for HIP to take in.

See response above.

- How often will the HIP meet/report?

As and when is necessary. For each report (the handbook) that the HIP produces, it is anticipated they will have 4-6 meetings over a timescale agreed with the HIP members themselves.

- What training would the HIP members receive?

See response under *Training* on page 5.

- Will TACI Team be working with the HIP?

Yes. In the initial stages, it is proposed that the consultant will work closely with the HIP until it is established but as in all other tenant participation activities/groups, support will be provided by the TACI Team. Although such support should reduce over time, as with other activities.

Tenant experience

- ***How the real experience of tenants during a service contact could be gauged without any interaction with tenants themselves.***

Tenant confirmed that this was still their view.

Additional queries/points

- Don't see how the HIP will work. How can it reflect tenants views if they don't have direct interaction with tenants – not actually talking to tenants?

The HIP will receive real service requests that have been captured accurately – it is not a survey of tenant opinions but a reflection of a real tenant asking a real officer for a service. It is based on listening to tenants when they request a service.

Face to face contact is one consultation technique – listening is another. It doesn't involve contacting tenants separately or after the event – the information is captured there and then when they request a service. The technique proposed for the HIP is deliberately different to avoid duplication of other activities.

- What will they (HIP) do after listening to the telephone calls?

The HIP will not listen to telephone calls – see response one page one under *Duplication*. HIP members will pull together the key points being asked for by tenants to complete its report (handbook) – see example in appendix 2 of CHTG report in March. The facilitator will support the HIP in this work and help them tease out the important issues to tenants.

- 'Cherry picking' telephone calls to get result that the Council want. Tenants were concerned that it would be easy to manipulate the information provided to the HIP because the Council would provide the information through telephone calls etc. Tenants wanted reassurance that manipulation would not occur.
- Also concerns that 'new' tenants on the HIP would look to staff for support - could again manipulate tenants.

Mutual trust is vital for tenant participation to work. The common goal is improved services for all tenants and must be the focus of all activities.

The Council is keen to undertake exercises to improve the service and staff will be supportive of this. 'Cherry picking' good examples will not tell us where we need to improve and so will be a waste of time for everyone involved – tenants and staff alike. The HIP would also assist in supporting another objective in the LTPS, which is to mainstream tenant participation across

Caerphilly Homes by involving staff from different service areas.

In addition to trust in staff, trust also needs to be afforded to the new tenants on the HIP to query or question information as they see fit just in the same way as tenants on other groups.

- How will you gauge outcomes for tenants?

The HIP will use information from real service requests to understand what tenant outcomes are required at each stage of service delivery. An example could be that when a tenant makes a complaint, the evidence from the real complaint telephone call might show that the initial outcome requested by tenants is to be "kept informed throughout the process" – this is an outcome and will improve the service for all tenants. That is what the project is designed to do.

Informal Group

- ***How can HIP be considered an informal group when it required formal terms of reference and code of conduct?***

When asked tenants confirmed their definition of informal was:

- Pizza and participation/chips and chat
- Nothing would be recorded
- General chit chat – no chair
- Fun-days

Additional queries/points

- Need explanation of what council see as an informal group.

The HIP will work as a series of Task & Finish groups and its method of operation is appropriate to that. Its working activities will produce outcomes, which will be the in 'handbooks'. The working methods of the HIP have been designed to achieve what the HIP needs to be achieved. It doesn't need to have the same structures or working methods as the more formal groups. It will not need a formal chair because it is not necessary. It will record its work but it will not need formal minutes, ratified at each meeting because its role is to produce the 'handbook'.

- If someone starts off as a member of the HIP and then moves onto other groups would that be allowed (also what about being member of community group)?

No, the HIP members would always need to be independent of any other tenant participation activities. In the same way as tenants currently involved in existing groups would not be able to participate in the HIP, then the same would apply to HIP members if they wanted to join other groups.

Attendance at TIE and appropriate training courses will always be available to involved tenants.

With regard to Community groups, Caerphilly Homes does not see this as a conflict of interest in the same way. Community groups are not involved to the same degree as tenants on our formal working groups etc in shaping the policies, services of the housing service. Community groups/Tenants & Residents Associations etc are independent in their own right.

- Could a tenant leaving a group join the HIP?

Yes, providing they were not involved in any other tenant participation activities or groups within the Council.

- How will the HIP tenants be recruited?

Recruitment methods have yet to be finalised. Some considerations may include an advert, letter, information posted on our social media sites etc.

- Is the HIP long term or short term?

Tenant scrutiny is a long-term tenant participation strategy. All tenant participation activities are reviewed and the HIP will be no different to this.

- How easy would it be to join the HIP when established?

Providing that the tenant has no current involvement in any established groups and there is a vacancy on the HIP and the tenant(s) is willing to undertake necessary training, joining can be immediate.

Expense/Cost of Project

- ***Given commitment and investment made to CSIMs re: training and support – HIP seen as an unnecessary additional expense.***

Tenants confirmed this was still their view

Additional queries/points

- Tenant members requested a breakdown of the costs.

Estimated costs:

• Recruitment	£5,000
• Training	£2,625
• Develop the framework/toolkit for service review	£2,250
• Review and evaluate pilot	£2,000
TOTAL	£11,875

- Queried why was a Consultant needed as the Council has experience in-house.

Yes, we do have certain skills in-house but this is a learning experience for us all and it was felt that the HIP and staff (at least in the initial stages) would benefit from an independent facilitator. Many landlords have used independent consultants extensively in scrutiny activities. If at a later date it is felt that facilitation can be undertaken in-house, then it will be considered.

Consultancy support will also retain a certain element of independence from routine operational activities. This support allows the tenants of the HIP to concentrate on their core activities of identifying what outcomes and experiences tenants can expect from each service and also demonstrates a genuine commitment to the HIP, wider body of tenants and staff that the scrutiny process is independent. It is felt that support from an independent consultant would be welcomed in the interim given the concerns that tenants raised that staff could manipulate the 'new' tenants on the HIP. However, there may always be the need for a 'critical' friend at key points in the process.

- Scrutiny only taking place in RSLs not LAs so concerns how would the HIP feed through (when there is no board?).

The work of the HIP will feed into our existing management and improvement framework, which includes the CHTG. Tenant scrutiny is a well-established engagement tool used by Housing Associations and Local Authorities. It's being undertaken because we believe it is an activity that will help us improve services and if Housing Associations can benefit from tenant scrutiny, then so can local authority tenants, regardless of the governance structure. The CHTG and P&R committees would be our equivalent reporting routes to that of various HA Committees.

- Need to be able to see an outcome that will benefit tenants (tenants felt the HIP was more beneficial for staff).

We believe that staff and tenants have the same goals/objectives, which is to improve the housing service. The HIP methodology has been proposed to assist us to deliver these goals. It is a technique to improve the effectiveness of tenant participation by learning from a wider group of tenants (in a specific service area), which is also another objective in our LTPS. Also see response under *Duplication* on page 1 & 2 and *Tenant Experience* on page 7 & 8.

Feedback

Tenants asked when they would have a response to their concerns.