

Lead Officer: Director of Housing

Wards: All

Agenda Item: 11

Subject:- Your Housing, Your Questions

1. SUMMARY

This report provides feedback on the two recent pilot of the Your Housing, Your Questions sessions that were arranged by the resident involvement team. The events were developed to provide an opportunity for residents to have direct contact with decision-makers to discuss issues which are important to them.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to share their views about the pilot scheme and agree that the Resident Involvement Group (RIG) develop a proposal for future events which will be presented to the next meeting of this Panel.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Croydon Council has an excellent track record in involving its tenants and leaseholders in the monitoring and management of their homes and estates.
- 3.2 The revised regulatory framework for social housing introduced by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) in April 2010 requires all housing providers to develop arrangements for co-regulation where the landlord and the tenant work to assess the landlord's performance and develop plans for service improvements.
- 3.3 In response to these regulatory changes the council reviewed its tenant involvement framework with tenants and the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Panel received a report in July 2012 setting out revisions to the resident involvement framework. One of the proposals was to pilot the introduction of housing question time events run along similar lines to the successful Council Question Time events.
- 3.4 The purpose of these question time events is to provide an alternative method for residents to engage with the decision makers in the housing service. It was felt this may prove more attractive to a range of residents who either wish to raise their issue at a higher level, as well as to those who do not engage in the existing framework.

- 3.5 To enable those residents who wish to raise personal housing issues through a face to face meeting to do so, a surgery is organised for 30 minutes prior to the start of the question time session, where tenants can talk one to one with representatives from the housing service.
- 3.6 Tenants and leaseholders were keen that these events were resident led i.e. residents would chair, and be involved in selecting venues and agreeing the make up of the panel. The resident involvement team would promote and service the events.
- 3.7 The Tenants' and Leaseholders' Panel agreed to pilot two events, one in the evening at Longheath Gardens, Ashburton and the other during an afternoon at the Town Hall. This report evaluates the Longheath Gardens event which took place on 7 November 2012 and the Town Hall event which took place on 16 January 2013.

4. DETAILS OF EVENTS

- 4.1 The timing of the Longheath event enabled it to be promoted through an article in Open House. Two or three days prior to the event, members of staff from the resident involvement team visited key locations in the area, such as tramstops, primary schools, etc., to distribute flyers and speak to people about the event, explaining what it was about and encouraging them to attend.
- 4.2 Both events were also heavily promoted by articles on the councils website and posters were used in various blocks across the borough. In addition, invitation letters were sent in advance, to around 130 residents on the councils database of people who regularly take part in activities provided by the resident involvement team, such as meetings and events.
- 4.3 In addition, following the event:
 - Each resident who attended the YHYQ events for whom we have contact details, was sent an individual response thanking them and outlining action that has either been taken or will be taken, as noted at the event.
 - Notes and the action plan from the YHYQ events were published on the housing section of the council website after the events.
 - Key outcomes and actions that have taken place as a result of questions, concerns and feedback from residents who attended the YHYQ event will be promoted in future editions of the Open House newsletter and the resident involvement team e. newsletter.
- 4.4 The panel for both the events was made up of Councillor Dudley Mead, Cabinet member for housing, Dave Sutherland, managing director of Croydon landlord services and Peter Brown, divisional director for Housing needs and strategy.

4.5 Members of the audience were able to submit questions written in advance on a card, which they could read out themselves or ask the chair to read out on their behalf. Alternately members of the audience had an opportunity to ask direct questions when invited to do so. In addition, questions could be submitted in advance of the event, by post or email.

4.6 Attendance at events

	Longheath	Town Hall
Number attending	29	32
Those who had pre registered	6	17
From local estate / area	14	12
Nearby (approx. 2 mile radius)	7	5
Across the borough	8	15

4.7 Feedback on the events

1. How did you hear about the event (could be more than one per person)

	Longheath	Town Hall
Letter	7	3
Leaflet / poster	7	7
Open House	4	4
Canvassing	6	N/A
Other	2	3

2 Results of exit (meeting effectiveness) survey

	Longheath	Town Hall
How many surveys completed	14	14
Did you find the event useful	86%	71%
Would you attend a future event	100%	85%
Did you think the event was well run	71%	64%
Did people listen to what others had to say	100%	93%

5. QUESTIONS AND ISSUES RAISED

5.1 A pre meeting surgery session was held for 30 minutes, immediately prior to each meeting. Residents were provided with an opportunity to raise personal issues or concerns with senior managers in attendance from three key service areas:

- responsive repairs
- tenancy and neighbourhood services
- housing solutions

These staff spoke with residents on a 1:1 basis and recorded a variety of issues which they either responded to directly at the event, or will feed back to the resident concerned in due course.

This was generally felt to be a useful service although a number of attendees were keen to see stock investment or planned maintenance, who did not attend either event.

5.2 During the open question and answer sessions, the panel heard 16 questions at the Longheath event and 18 questions from the Town Hall event. These were direct from the floor or asked via the pre written question cards. A high level overview of the categories of questions is given in the table below.

Subject	Number of questions	
	L / heath	Town hall
Community Safety (anti-social behaviour, CCTV, lighting)	5	8
Supply and allocation of housing	4	5
Planned maintenance works (security doors, kitchen / bathroom, supported decoration scheme)	3	3
Responsive repairs (damp/condensation, guttering)	2	1
External grounds maintenance	2	0
Leasehold charges	1	0
Other / misc	2	1

Within this, the top three issues during both YHYQ events were:

1. Community safety and ASB
2. Housing supply and allocations
3. Planned maintenance and improvements

5.3 A significant amount of discussion took place at both meetings around issues that did not require specific / direct action but residents were seeking information or clarity. Key topics included the provision of council / social housing and management of the allocations process, issues around antisocial behaviour, including people gathering and behaving in an anti social manner, dog fouling and poor lighting which may make people feel insecure and the recent changes to the benefits system.

5.4 Whilst many questions and issues were dealt with during the sessions, there were some issues which require further action. At the time of producing this report, full information about the progress of actions from the Town Hall event is not available. However, of the 7 issues captured at the Longheath event, the agreed action was completed within 3 weeks of the event in 4 cases and all actions have now been completed, including putting some detailed plans in place, relating to preventing ASB on an estate.

5.5 Examples, from both events, of items that required action include:

1. A resident from a special sheltered housing unit reported that the communal gardens are not well maintained and need urgent attention. It was agreed that the neighbourhood services manager will be asked to visit the tenant and follow up required action with colleagues who manage the contract with Continental Landscapes.
2. A number of tenants from one estate reported a recent increase in the number and scale of incidents of ASB. The head of tenancy and neighbourhood services will meet residents, investigate the matter and come up with some realistic options to improve the situation in that area.

3. A resident from a block reported that a fallen tree in the communal gardens had been there for some time. The Tenancy Officer will visit and if necessary arrange for the tree to be taken away.
4. Residents of Belgrave Road are experiencing difficulty parking in the bays that are provided for their use. It was noted this is not currently a controlled parking zone and it was agreed that contact would be made with parking services to establish if a controlled parking zone can be set up in this location.
5. The issue of repeat fly-tipping on the Fieldway estate was reported and it was agreed that Yvonne Murray would liaise with the resident about setting up a task group to address the situation and devise a solution.
6. A resident reported he and his family had been rehoused in a heavily adapted ground floor property and he is keen to move to another property. It was agreed that an officer would visit the property to note the adaptations provided. Senior officers will then agree if a Management Transfer is warranted, in order to release the property for use by a disabled resident.

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