

Lead Officer: Executive Director of Place

Wards: All

Agenda Item: 6

Subject: Review of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of this report and support the recommendations to:
- a) Make immediate changes to improve the operation of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel
 - b) Review the membership criteria of the panel
 - c) Review the remit of the panel and the wider resident involvement framework

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report proposes that a review of the operation of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel takes place, together with residents, with the aim of increasing the opportunity for residents to influence housing policies and strategies.
- 2.2. The report also recommends some immediate changes to the operation and membership of the panel.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Tenant & Leaseholder Panel was established over 20 years ago bringing together representatives from all residents' associations on council estates across the borough. The panel has always been part of the council's committee framework and councilors are nominated to attend by their respective parties.
- 3.2 Initially the panel provided an opportunity for residents to raise issues about their housing services and be consulted on any proposed service or policy changes. Over time the role of the panel has evolved. It is now part of an involvement framework which aims to provide opportunities for all tenants and leaseholders to become involved in ways that are convenient to them and in areas of the service which they have an interest in.

- 3.3 As a result the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel should focus on housing policy and strategy which affects all housing service users. Matters regarding the delivery of housing services should be raised locally where there are residents' associations or resident forums. Alternatively, residents can join a service improvement group which monitors service performance.
- 3.4 However it has been increasingly common for discussions at this panel to focus on service delivery issues which should be or are being addressed at the meetings mentioned on paragraph 3.3. This can lead to duplication and impact on its ability of this panel to address strategic and policy matters.
- 3.5 At the last meeting of this panel it was agreed that an informal meeting of panel members be arranged to discuss its future operation. Prior to this meeting taking place a short survey was emailed to panel members and the results helped to shape the agenda and discussion at the meeting.
- 3.6 The meeting took place on 6 September and was facilitated by Phil Morgan an independent expert in resident involvement. The meeting was well received by the 10 members who attended.

4. Detail

- 4.1 The survey showed that many residents wanted officers to be more accountable for the services they deliver, have a say on working practices and be consulted on important housing issues. However a number of residents were content just to attend meetings to hear what is going on.
- 4.2 There was also concern about the number and diversity of panel members. It was clear that few younger residents were engaging with the panel and felt that more needed to be done to ensure that membership reflected the communities who live on our estates. Others felt that more engagement should be done digitally to attract a wider group of residents to make their views known.
- 4.3 At the meeting the strongest single message was that they wanted greater accountability for the services they receive as tenants and leaseholders. There was frustration that issues were raised at meetings and did not seem to be dealt with. Panel members wanted answers, action plans and accountability from officers responsible for delivery of services.
- 4.4 There was also concern raised about why some panel members attended but did not contribute to the discussions, make suggestions for service improvements or ask questions.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 It is clear that the council needs to review the existing involvement framework to provide opportunities for a wider range of residents to make their views heard. It is important that residents are provided with the opportunity to raise service delivery issues but these should not be raised at this panel under its current terms of reference.

- 5.2 The resident involvement group will meet over the coming months to review the remit of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel, taking into account the views in Phil Morgan's summary and good practice by other social landlords. The group will report back to this panel with its recommendations.
- 5.3 There are also immediate actions the council can take to address some of the concerns raised by panel members. This will include the following:
- Report forms to be issued at all meetings to enable panel members to report personal housing issues and not raise them during the meeting
 - The resident involvement activity report (included on all panel agendas) to include more detailed information on the issues being discussed at the service improvement group
 - Future minutes to include an action plan detailing the action, responsible officer and completion date.
 - A recruitment drive for new panel members
- 5.4 It is recommended that the membership criteria for the panel be reviewed. It is proposed that all residents who wish to be a member of the panel will be required to complete a self-assessment application form on which they will be asked to set out why they wish to be a member and how they will contribute to the work of the panel. The details of this process will be agreed with the resident involvement group.
- 5.5 The expectation is that using a selection process will ensure that residents who sit on the panel do so to represent their wider community and/or to bring a relevant professional knowledge or experience to the panel. The selection process should ensure that residents' personal interests or skills are applied to the most appropriate group or activity.

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