

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder

18 January 2011

**AUTHOR/S:** Executive Director of Operational Services / Corporate Manager  
Affordable Homes

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### **BALLOT AND ELECTION OF TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP MEMBERS**

#### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this short report is to inform the Portfolio Holder of the following
  - a) The reasoning behind the ballot
  - b) How the ballot was run
  - c) The ballot results
  - d) Resident Involvement and governance further developments
2. This is not a key decision. The paper is for information only at the request of the Portfolio Holder.

#### **Recommendation**

3. That the Portfolio Holder notes this report.

#### **Background**

4. The resident involvement structure developed historically in response to the residents interested in getting involved and being facilitated to do so. In the last four years there has been a more structured approach to resident engagement and the number of forums has increased and now comprises:
  - a) Tenant Participation Group or TPG
  - b) Disability Forum
  - c) Leaseholder Forum
  - d) Sheltered Housing Forum West
  - e) Sheltered Housing Forum East
  - f) Sheltered Housing Forum South
  - g) Tenant E-Say Group
5. The overarching tenant and leaseholder group is the TPG. TPG is the forum to which significant policy changes, procedural reviews, best practice, performance information and aspirations for the housing service are taken for discussion.
6. The Localism Act 2011, as well as the future revised regulatory framework for social housing currently subject to consultation, requires housing providers to engage with their tenants as customers in a much more meaningful way.
7. The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) have developed the regulatory framework but the role is to be taken over from April 2012 by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).
8. The main overview of the Localism Act in respect of resident involvement is

- Co-regulation continues – tenants, councilors and board members are to hold landlords to account and drive service improvement
- The six national standards as developed by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) will effectively remain in place but will be amended slightly to reflect the Localism Act's provisions (see below)
- Landlords must continue to make annual report to their tenants (but not to the regulator) on their performance against the standards
- There is an increased emphasis on local accountability ( especially local offers) with tenants setting priorities and monitoring delivery
- Rigorous landlord self-assessment is expected, including benchmarking, independent validation and peer review.

9. The TSA set out the principles of Co-Regulation in 2009. These principles were intended to shift engagement onto a more robust footing.

- The principles of co-regulation as enhanced in the TSA Statutory Consultation (A revised regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2012)
- Boards and councillors who govern providers and accountable for delivering their organisations social housing objectives
- Providers must meet the regulatory standards
- Transparency and accountability is central to co-regulation
- Tenants should have opportunities to shape service delivery and to hold the responsible boards and councillors to account
- Providers should understand the particular needs of their tenants
- Value for money goes to the heart of how the providers ensure current and future delivery of their services

### **Considerations**

10. The Portfolio Holder agreed a Resident Involvement Strategy in July 2010. This strategy included an action to move towards an elected representative body. The changes to the regulatory framework noted above required the bringing forward of this planned action and this was requested by the Portfolio Holder at his meeting on 15 June 2011.

11. Actions pre ballot:

- Publicised election and ballot in South Cambs Magazine, on Council Website, in newsletters, and at Tenant Forum's – seeking nominees
- Commissioned the Electoral Reform Services to run a transparent and independent election process
- Creation of ballot papers and candidates election statements

- Election papers sent out to all tenants and leaseholders with a closing date of November 21st 2011

12. Results of ballot:

- Of the total number of eligible voters at 7,556 persons, we received 1,718 returned ballots that were valid.
- All the 15 candidates were elected with votes per candidate averaging at 886 votes.
- The turnout was 23% and is a positive mandate for the TPG.

13. In addition to the 15 members we will also have an elected representative from each of the following forum (to ensure these forum's were represented and linked to TPG), which will bring elected members to 20 in total by March 2012:

- Disability Forum - already elected
- Leaseholder Forum - election pending December 15th
- Sheltered Housing Forum - North - election pending – Jan 2012
- Sheltered Housing Forum - East - election pending – Jan 2012
- Sheltered Housing Forum - West - election pending – Jan 2012

14. A diagram of the new tenant structure is attached as Appendix 1.

**Options**

15. There are now options for the future development of resident involvement and governance. To meet the new regulatory requirements this will include:

- (a) Tenant Panels (or similar) for scrutiny of the service
- (b) Tenant representatives involvement in the resolution of complaints via a locally accountable democratic filter
- (c) Tenant involvement in setting service priorities and monitoring delivery
- (d) Working with tenants to look at future governance arrangements for the housing service

16. Further service options will be brought to the Portfolio Holder when the Resident Involvement Strategy is refreshed during 2012.

**Implications**

17. Financial	Additional budget may need to be found to facilitate the new aims of the Localism Act and the TSA regulatory framework in relation to resident involvement. This has been allowed for in the new 30 year HRA Businesses Plan.
Legal	The Council will need to ensure that it is able to comply with the regulatory framework for housing.

Staffing	Further staff resource is required and forms part of the proposals for Affordable Homes staff restructuring contained in a separate report to the Portfolio Holder.
Risk Management	A significant failure to address resident involvement could lead to sanctions being applied to the Council via the regulatory framework.
Equality and Diversity	There are benefits of greater involvement from residents, which include specific forums that represent interest of older tenants and people with disabilities and people unable to attend evening meetings.
Equality Impact Assessment completed	N/A
Climate Change	Limited negative impact on carbon emissions as there is a need to travel to meetings to and from many villages.

### **Consultation**

18. None

### **Consultation with Children and Young People**

19. None

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

20. Part of the Council's Long Term Vision Aim "We will listen to and engage with residents". The development of an elected tenant body is a significant step forward in improving the engagement of tenants and the Council.

### **Conclusions / Summary**

21. The Council now has an elected and representative group of fifteen tenants with five representatives elected from other forums, with a formal constitution and governance arrangements. We are now well positioned to look to the future challenges as detailed in this report.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

HQN – An overview of the Localism Act 2011 and its significance (Nov 2011) Sue Farrant

TSA – A revised Regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2012 – a statutory consultation

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**APPENDIX 1**

*Resident Involvement Structure at South Cambridgeshire District Council*

