



WARDS AFFECTED: ALL WARDS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide background on tenant regulation and to seek comment from the Finance and Performance Scrutiny on the review projects to be conducted by the Tenant Evaluation Team during 2016/17.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Finance and Performance Scrutiny

- 2.1 Reviews and comment on the proposed areas for evaluation by the Tenant Evaluation Team outlined in 4.2 and 4.3.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 3.1 Under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), responsibility for social housing regulation passed to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Regulation Committee from 1st April 2012. Prior to 1st April 2012, the regulator was the Tenant Services Authority.
- 3.2 Tenant Involvement and Empowerment is one of the consumer standards set out in the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England clearly stating that registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved.
- 3.3 Housing providers' boards and Councillors are responsible for ensuring their organisation meets the consumer standards. The regulator's role is limited to setting the consumer standards and intervening only where failure of the standard could lead to risk of serious harm to tenants (the 'serious detriment test')
- 3.4 The co-regulatory principles underpin the regulatory approach. One of the key principles of co-regulation is that tenants should have opportunities to shape service delivery and to hold the responsible boards and Councillors to account.
- 3.5 A Tenant Scrutiny Panel is one function that would enable the council to meet the regulatory standards set out above. At a Tenant Scrutiny workshop held in September 2012 tenants confirmed that a Tenant Scrutiny Panel is their preferred choice. In discussion with tenants the name of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel was changed to the Tenant Evaluation team.
- 3.6 The Tenant Evaluation team was appointed in December 2013, following endorsement of the project by the Council Executive in January 2013. The team is tasked with evaluating HRA council house services and conducting reviews to recommend improvements. Agreement for the project included the need for Executive endorsement of proposed projects.

3.7 The Resident Involvement Strategy 2015-18, approved by the Council in September 2015, also sets out plans to enable residents to get actively involved in improving and developing high quality housing services by providing opportunities for them to scrutinise and inspect services.

3.8 Following recruitment and training, the Tenant Evaluation team completed a pilot project on methods of obtaining customer satisfaction by the repairs team in December 2015. The group made a series of recommendations, and an action plan has been approved with Managers. The Tenant Evaluation team comprises eight tenant members supported by the Resident Involvement Officer who acts as the liaison officer for the project.

4. PROPOSED REVIEWS FOR 2016/17

4.1 The Tenant Evaluation team are proposing two reviews for this period. The first is to look at why Sheltered Housing takes longer to let than other properties. The second is to investigate the number of return visits for repairs jobs conducted by the in-house team.

4.2 The review of sheltered housing re-let times will take place from June-December 2016 and will include:

A scheme by scheme analysis to identify specific and common issues;
Consideration of marketing and advertising opportunities;
Consideration of financial criteria;
Consideration of allocations criteria.

4.3 An investigation into return visits for jobs completed by the in-house team will take place from December 2016-April 2017. It will include:

Consideration of current performance relating to Right First Time and First time fix.
An analysis of the number of return visits made after a job has been signed off.
Investigate the reasons for these return visits and identify opportunities for reducing these, if relevant.

4.4 A more detailed scope for both of the above projects will be agreed with the relevant Managers before the project is taken forward. This will ensure that staff are able to consider the requirements for the project and ensure that the relevant information and staff time can be allocated.

4.5 The Finance and Performance Scrutiny are asked to consider and comment on the proposed projects prior to Executive sign off.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (TF)

5.1 All costs for this project will be met by existing budgets.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (AR)

6.1 As set out above regulation is governed by the Homes Community Agency in accordance with the statutory powers granted within the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 ("the Act").

6.2 The regulatory and enforcement powers are set out within the Act and can only be exercised if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the failure has resulted in a serious detriment to tenants and potential tenants; or there is significant risk, that if no action is taken by the Homes Community Agency, the failure will result in a serious detriment to the tenants or potential tenants.

- 6.3 The legal test within 5.2 is what is known as the 'serious detriment test' and requires a high burden in order to justify regulatory intervention.
- 6.4 The enforcement powers granted to the Homes Community Agency includes the awarding of financial compensation to aggrieved parties.

7. CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The work of the Evaluation Team supports the following corporate aims:

Empowering communities
Providing value for money and pro-active services

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Members of Together for Tenants and Repairs Working Group
Executive Member Housing Community Safety & Partnerships
Team Managers – Housing Community Safety & Partnerships, Housing Repairs.

9. KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY – EQUALITY AND RURAL IMPLICATIONS

The Evaluation team works for the benefit of all individual tenants and residents and strives to ensure that no group or individual will be disadvantaged as a consequence of its activities. Positions were advertised in a mail-out to all tenants and the meetings are held in the evening and ensure disabled access. Adjustments are made where necessary to enable participation. Questions regarding equality and diversity are asked at interview and members are required to sign a Equality and Diversity commitment and undertake training.

10. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Recommendations arising from the Evaluation Team, if endorsed, may require a reconfiguration of existing resources, and/or additional resources.

Background papers: Evaluation Team Pilot report
COB report of 29th March and minutes
Evaluation Team terms of reference
Resident Involvement Strategy 2015-18

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