

Issue 7

Tenant Services News

25th October 2010

Housing Improvement Plan

The improvement plan is now starting to deliver some real changes with only 7 of the 82 action points not having started yet (these are actions scheduled for later this financial year). As at 21st October, 17 actions had been fully completed, further 29 part completed and work having started on another 29. This means that over 90% of the action points have been or are being addressed.

Since the last newsletter, we have been taking steps to develop mystery shopping/tenant inspection and tenant scrutiny options by writing to all of the following;

- All officers of existing tenant/sheltered associations
- All Village Voice and Street Representatives
- All tenants from the profile survey who had expressed an interest in being involved.

The letter gave more detail about what being involved in any of these projects would mean and asking people to indicate if they still wanted to be considered. Responses are being collated and there is interest which we will be developing. Encouragingly, a number of tenants are interested in scrutiny, either a s part of a project team to set up the scrutiny panel or as part of the panel itself.

If any member of staff wants to be involved in any of the actions identified in the improvement plan, please contact either myself or the identified lead officer. This does not have to be an action linked to your current role in the organisation. For example, someone dealing with business support might be interested in helping to develop on some of the tenant participation issues and someone dealing with repairs might want to be involved with some estate management issues.

Staff Meetings – Spending Review, future of the TSA

The latest round of briefings were held at the Chapel lane meeting room near Ebley Mill and we are looking at the possibility of holding all future meetings at this location.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the main area of interest for staff was how the spending review and the decision to abolish the TSA would affect what we are doing at Stroud. The reality is that it is too soon to get any clear idea as to what these changes (especially for the spending review) will mean for Stroud and that for the moment we should simply concentrate on delivering service improvements through the improvement plan. We are still being regulated by the TSA and need to work with them but the changes we are putting in place

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should happen regardless of the nature of any regulation as they are the right thing to be doing anyway. The abolition process will happen once appropriate legislation has been passed and we understand that this will be included in the Localism Bill which we understand will be tabled in November.

The review document from the Department for Communities and Local Government envisages the non financial regulatory role of the TSA being undertaken through local tenant scrutiny with service failures being primarily addressed through local resolution. This seems likely to require a robust complaints and resolution process to be in place with an enhanced role for the Housing Ombudsman in helping to resolve matters at a later stage. There would still be an ability for the regulator to intervene where there is perceived to be significant failure and inspections may remain an appropriate tool to assess landlord in these circumstances. As more information, especially on when changes are to take place, becomes available, we will let you know.

A final copy of the recently completed Annual Report for tenants was circulated and seemed to meet with overall approval. Staff were also asked about the preferred option for information leaflets we are producing and without exception felt that an A4 3 fold leaflet as opposed to a two sided A5 version was preferred. We still need to ask tenants for their preferences and this will happen in the coming week.

Customer Profiling

Forms continue to come in with a 36% return to date. A report is in preparation analysing the results of the survey and this will be published shortly.

Some of the interesting information to date is as follows:

- More than 200 tenants requesting documents in large print in the future
- More than 295 tenants with hearing difficulties
- 300 tenants indicating that they wish to be more involved with the Council either formally (through resident groups etc) or informally (through postal/telephone surveys)
- More than 90 tenants expressing an interest in being involved in mystery shopping

On the leaseholder front, an initial meeting has been arranged with a number of leaseholders for Tuesday 26th October.

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