

HOUSING COMMITTEE

11 SEPTEMBER 2018

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Report Title	The Changing Future of Tenant Involvement
Purpose of Report	Feedback to Housing Committee to establish the outcomes discussed and agreed by the tenant Task & Finish and Working Group on how we consult, fund and seek support from tenants in the future
Decisions	Committee RESOLVES: 1 The recommendation at 5.2 for a phased reduction in grant funding be agreed over the next 2 years. 2 The criteria and conditions of role for the Neighbourhood Ambassadors are agreed.
Consultation and Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Task & Finish Group and the Working Group Chaired by Councillor Colin Fryer • Tenant involvement from Tenant Groups • Tenant Involvement from individuals who expressed an interest • Tenant Involvement from our Tenant Representatives on Housing Committee?
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>There are no financial implication arising directly from this report.</p> <p>Lucy Clothier, Principal Accountant Tel: 01453 754343 Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk</p> <p>Risk Assessment by author The regulator for social housing administers compliance with the tenant involvement and empowerment standard which requires providers to ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in decisions relating to housing related services including policies. This process is fully compliant with that approach.</p>
Legal Implications	<p>On the basis that such is not intended, care needs to be taken to ensure that the new Ambassador role does not inadvertently amount to or become an employee / employer relationship for which there would be additional responsibilities for the Council. The Committee may also wish to further clarify the existing or any revised process for grant applications e.g. which officer, if not, the committee will determine applications and what criteria will be applied to establish community benefit. (r158c168)</p> <p>Karen Trickey, Head of Legal Services Email: karen.trickey@stroud.gov.uk</p>
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Performance Management Follow Up	Updated performance to the Housing Committee on a 6 monthly basis
Background Papers / Appendices	A. Neighbourhood Ambassador criteria B. Neighbourhood Ambassador conditions of role C. Grant Application for Neighbourhood Ambassadors

1. Background

- 1.1 Tenant Involvement is a key regulatory compliance requirement as part of co-regulation. Supporting tenants and improving the services we provide, Tenant Services recognise the benefits of tenant involvement in enhancing the communities in which they live and providing social value to individuals, improving wellbeing, increasing confidence and environmental sustainability and involving tenants in issues which matter and are transparent.
- 1.2 Following the paper to Committee in March 2018, outlining the changing future of tenant involvement, a Task & Finish Group and a Working Group were set up and Chaired by Cllr Colin Fryer, to consider how we move forward and encourage a greater number and broader range of tenants to engage with us and to consider outcomes that align themselves to our Corporate Delivery Plan, which implies through its main themes involvement of its stakeholders which includes tenants.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The groups reviewed the decisions taken by Housing Committee in March 2018 and the strategic aims of tenant involvement and recognised the need for Tenant Services as the Landlord to reduce costs whilst engaging with a greater cohort of tenants to build positive and effective communities.
- 2.2 March Committee resolved to:
1. Continue to support existing tenant groups with the commitment that funding will have defined outcomes evidencing the benefit to the community and the council.
 2. Implement a programme of digital access consultation through social media to achieve a varying consultative audience.
 3. The re-development of Tenant Inspectors to scrutinise the service as part of an agreed work programme with defined outcomes and recommendations to be reported to Housing Committee.
 4. Development of Tenant Reps to Neighbourhood Ambassadors.
 5. Utilise £10K from the environment fund to be dedicated to training Tenant Inspectors and Neighbourhood Ambassadors to ensure levels of professionalism are enhanced.
 6. Review the tenant grants process to ensure the values are fit for purpose and funding is proportionate.

3. Task & Finish Group

3.1 Membership is made up of:

Cllr Colin Fryer (Chair)
Representative from Sunnyhill Residents Association
Representative Middle of the Hill Residents Association
Representative from Central Road Downfield Street Representative
Tenant Representative to the Housing Committee
Michelle Elliott (Principal Tenancy Management Officer)

3.2 The Task and Finish Group investigated and researched both annual and grant funding that the tenant groups currently receive and in particular looked at a range of similar organisations to establish how others ensured funding was reasonable, proportionate and fit for purpose. The group also established that any findings should be accompanied by outcomes that would be of benefit to both the community and the council.

3.3 Findings of the Task & Finish Group

The group established that best practice from other authorities indicated that any grant funding should demonstrate the expected outcome for funding and a description of how the grant would benefit the local community. It was also established that few authorities continued to give annual grants to local groups as there was an expectation that groups would fundraise or collect subscriptions for annual costs. (Appendice C)

3.4 Recommendations of Task & Finish Group

3.5 The task & finish group considered the following proposal should be put forward for committee decision in relation to the tenant annual grants;

2018/2019	50% of the current grant should be paid to all groups
2019/2020	25% of the current grant should be paid to all groups
2020/2021	All groups should become self sufficient

3.6 Established groups in line with tenant services model should be able to apply to the Community fund for funding that would have a recognised outcome for their community. In order to apply for this they would complete a grant application which would establish the benefit for the community (appendix C attached).

3.7 For the tenants who meet the criteria and are successful at becoming a Neighbourhood Ambassador, they will automatically be able to apply for grant funding.

4. The Working Group

4.1 Membership made up of:

Cllr Colin Fryer (Chair)
Representative from Middle of the Hill Residents Association
Representative from Sunnyhill Residents Association

Resident from Hazelwood Sheltered Housing
Resident from The Corriett Sheltered Housing
Tenant Representative to the Housing Committee
Michelle Elliott (Principal Tenancy Management Officer)

4.2 The Working group considered the following :

- Digital consultation and how to ensure that social media is used in its varying forms to reach a wider audience
- The redevelopment of both Tenant Repairs and Scrutiny Inspectors
- Development of Neighbourhood Ambassadors
- Training for all Neighbourhood Ambassadors to ensure a level of understanding and professionalism

4.3 **Findings from the Working Group**

4.4 **Digital access** – Following a presentation by Rachael Lythgoe (Communications Officer), the group were made aware of the use of Facebook as one tool of communication that could encourage more tenants to engage with the council, however, there was a concern of the limitations for using Facebook by some of the group members to be able to engage openly with other tenants and therefore training would be a necessary on digital access to identify other forms of engagement through this method.

4.5 **Tenant Repairs & Scrutiny Inspectors** – it was acknowledged that a training programme is underway for tenant repairs inspectors and several of the group are participating in this training which started in July. A training session is booked for September and October. However it was recognised that there was a requirement to arrange promotion and training for scrutiny inspectors, which we will arrange in September 2018

4.6 **Neighbourhood Ambassadors** – It was recognised that moving forward Neighbourhood Ambassadors require training to ensure that they are able to engage with hard to reach groups, understand the correct way to share information and find innovative ways to fundraise for their communities.

4.7 **Recommendations from The Working Group**

4.8 **Training**

4.9 Training was considered a major factor in the move forward and the ability to utilise £10K from the Community fund would ensure this was possible and the following courses were identified as being worthwhile:

- Digital engagement
- Effective tenant engagement
- Fundraising for communities
- Understanding tenant scrutiny
- Communities & diversity
- GDPR training

4.10 It was also identified that it would be advantageous to hold in house training surrounding Tenant Services processes such as repairs, anti-social behaviour and service standards. Training to commence in January 2019, concluding by March 2019.

4.11 **Tenant Repairs & Scrutiny Inspectors**

4.12 Publicise and promotion of the role of tenant repairs & scrutiny inspectors through Facebook, current tenant groups and at all tenant service events and ensure a training programme is arranged to support volunteers. TPAS offer excellent training programmes that we can facilitate.

4.13 **Neighbourhood Ambassadors**

4.14 A Neighbourhood Ambassador criteria and personal specification has been written (appendices attached) with involved tenants. It is envisaged that all tenants wishing to sign up for this role would agree and sign up to this (Appendice A & B attached). An information update to members would be provided in 2019 on the success of this approach.

5. **Summary**

5.1 If we continue our previous tenant involvement approach, we can assume that we will not engage with a wider audience, which will impact on service delivery.

5.2 'If you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always got' (attributed to Henry Ford)

5.3 It has been widely recognised that tenant engagement is key to the delivery of our housing service, however we have reached a time for change, whereby our aspirations for the future will include a wider tenant group engaging with us through a variety of mediums.

5.4 If the recommendations are accepted we will report back to Housing Committee in March 2019 on the implementation of:

- Tenant & Scrutiny Inspectors
- Training Plan
- Involvement of Neighbourhood Ambassadors

5.5 Once this implementation is underway we will revise the Tenant Involvement strategy with the support of a tenant focus group and report back to Housing Committee in December 2018.