

Report to the Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of report: 18 March 2008

Portfolio: Housing – Councillor D Stallan

Subject: Tenant Participation Progress 2007

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Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry, ext. 4246



Recommendation:

That progress made on the implementation of Tenant Participation during the period 1 January 2007 – 31 December 2007 be noted.

Background:

1. At the Tenant Participation Progress meeting held on 23rd October 2007 and following discussion with the Director of Housing, it was agreed to provide a yearly tenant participation update to the Housing Standing Scrutiny Panel.
2. The Housing Services Strategy on Tenant Participation which was updated in 2007 sets out the Council's approach to tenant participation and how the service will be delivered.

Existing Groups

3. There are currently 6 established residents groups, namely,
 - Debden Tenants Panel, Loughton;
 - Limes Farm Community Association, Chigwell;
 - Oakwood Hill Residents Association, Loughton;
 - Paternoster North Residents Association, Upshire;
 - Roundhills Residents Association, Waltham Abbey;
 - Shelley Residents Association, Ongar.
4. To become established and remain 'recognised', each group must fulfil the Council's criteria for formal recognition.
5. In addition to the existing groups, there are 3 associations representing specific groups of residents:
 - Epping Forest Leaseholders Association;
 - Epping Forest Sheltered Forum;
 - Epping Forest Rural Tenants Forum;

and an 'Umbrella' group, the Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Association, that includes representatives of all the other groups.

6. Each of the residents groups has signed a Local Tenant Participation Agreement with the Council, which sets out the approach each group and the Council will adopt in relation to tenant participation. These agreements are renewed on a yearly basis.

7. Each of the residents groups is invited to apply for a support grant of up to £250 per annum and a minor estate enhancement grant of up to £500 per annum.

New Groups

8. The Tenant Participation Officer has been working with residents in Buckhurst Hill; Romeland, Waltham Abbey; Sheering and Roydon, with the aim of setting up representative groups in these areas.

9. Ninefields, Waltham Abbey and North Weald/Coopersale have been identified as areas to target for setting up new groups and Community Consultation events are being held in these areas in 2008 to help facilitate this.

Diversity

10. In its Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's) the Government has identified a number of 'Hard to Reach' groups; rural communities, younger people, minority groups, families; that landlords are expected to include in the tenant participation process. The Tenant Participation Officer has been working with a number of these groups in a variety of ways.

11. In November 2007 a Pampering/Consultation Day aimed at young parents on Limes Farm Estate, Chigwell was held and as a result, a group now meets on a weekly basis, with Council officers attending from time to time.

12. A corporate Disability Equality Scheme Consultative Group was set up in August 2007 and two tenants with disabilities are now attending its meetings.

13. The Epping Forest Multi-Faith Forum was established in May 2007 and it is the aim to link EFDC tenants group to the forum in 2008.

14. The Epping Forest Sheltered Forum represents EFDC tenants living in Sheltered or Group – dwelling schemes and properties covered by a Scheme Manager. The Forum meets bi-monthly and continues to grow.

15. The Epping Forest Rural Tenants Forum was set up in November 2006 and continues to expand. Twelve rural areas of the district are now represented on the forum with five new members joining in 2007.

Administration and Management of Tenant Participation

16. The Tenant Participation Officer holds monthly progress meetings with the Housing Resources Manager and Principal Housing Officer (Information and Strategy) and quarterly progress meetings with the Assistant Director of Housing (Operations).

17. The Tenant Participation Officer maintains an Action Plan which monitors progress of all aspects of tenant participation. Progress of the Action Plan is discussed at both the monthly and quarterly meetings.

Targets

18. A list of targets for 2008/9 is attached as appendix 1. This list forms part of the HRA Business Plan.