

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 21 January 2010

Subject: The Tenant Services Authority's new draft regulatory framework for social housing in England

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Committee Secretary: M Jenkins (01992 56 4607)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That consideration be given to the Tenant Services Authority's new Draft Regulatory Framework which is currently out to consultation and the Council's response to the consultation questions, set out at Appendix 2, be agreed.

Report:

1. The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the Government's new social housing regulator who will be working to raise the standard of services for all social housing tenants.
2. The TSA are currently undertaking a statutory consultation on their new Regulatory Framework for social housing in England which will commence from 1 April 2010. The main purpose of the consultation is to seek views of housing providers about whether the proposals best meet with the Government's objectives and is an opportunity to influence how their new powers are implemented. The consultation period ends on 5 February 2010, following which a decision statement will be issued before the new powers are activated.
- 3. Prior to the Panel considering the draft Regulatory Framework, the Director of Housing and Assistant Director of Housing (Operations) will be making a presentation to the Panel on the new Regulatory Framework, and the preparations needed to meet its requirements.**
4. A summary of the consultation document is attached at Appendix One, (a copy of the full document is available at statutoryconsultation@tsa.gsx.gov.uk). The full document asks 15 consultation questions. The Panel is asked to consider the draft response to each of the consultation questions which are attached at Appendix Two.
5. The Tenants and Leaseholder's Federation have set up a sub group to consider the consultation which is due to meet on 18 January 2010 to consider the Framework. Their responses to each of the questions will be tabled and reported verbally at the meeting.
6. In order to meet with its commitment to improve standards and service delivery for tenants, the TSA will set standards for those services it considers tenants will care about the most, which will protect tenants from poor performing landlords.
7. At its meeting on 15 December 2009, the Panel considered a draft report to the Housing Portfolio Holder, (which was subsequently agreed) on the Housing Service Standards 2009 & Housing Charter. The report set out the performance against previously agreed standards and changes and additions to the standards which were first introduced in 2007. It was further agreed by the Housing Portfolio Holder that the standards and performance against the standards be reviewed again in either 2010, or when required to comply with the new Regulatory Framework.
8. Under the new Regulatory Framework, the TSA have contracted the Audit Commission to

undertake comprehensive short notice inspections on its behalf. It is expected that providers who are under-performing in certain areas will be inspected, with the emphasis being placed on homelessness, allocations, housing management, gas safety and repairs and maintenance. The Audit Commission will notify the Council 5 days in advance of their visit.

9. Officers have set up a Continuous Improvement Group who will be drawing up a Continuous Improvement Plan setting out all of the actions required in order to ensure that the Housing Directorate are prepared for the Short Notice Inspection regime which could take place at any time from April 2010 with only 5 days notice.

10. Having received the views of the Tenants and Leaseholder's Sub-group, the Panel are therefore asked to agree the Council's response to the draft Regulatory Framework and the consultation questions.