

Social Inclusion Scrutiny – Tenants Participation

Notes of the Consultative Group

Held on Monday 10th November 2003 - Committee Room 4, Town Hall

Present:	Cllr Tom Shaw	Chair of Social Inclusion Committee
	Anne Conlon	Chair of Tenants Consultative Committee
	Linda Mitchell	Tenants Consultative Committee
	Tony Gamble	Tenants Consultative Committee
	Ray Mitchell	Vice Chair Tenants Consultative Committee
	Barbara McLellan	Presentation Housing Association
	Ed Butler	Luton Borough Council
	Christine Ansell	Luton Borough Council
	Angela Fraser	Scrutiny Officer
	Cllr McGarvie	Member of Social Inclusion Committee
	Cllr Timoney	Member of Social Inclusion Committee

1. Introduction

AF welcomed the group and handed over to the Chair (Cllr Shaw) who explained the purpose of the meeting and why they had been invited.

2. Background

The Chair explained the background for this scrutiny saying that housing association stocks in Luton are on the increase and tenants participation is stagnating throughout Luton with housing associations showing little involvement. This working group has been formed to oversee the scrutiny by examining all the alternatives including the possibility of evolving tenant participation in with area committees and linking them into the current area committee structures. The tenant participation topic will follow the five-stage scrutiny process (scoping, evidence gathering, analysis of evidence, conclusions and recommendations and final report). The timescale for completion of this topic is between six to nine months.

Over 50% of the social housing properties in Luton are under represented at tenants committees. This calls for a consultation exercise to identify the problems and to look at the best ways of getting people engaged in tenant's participation. The aim of this scrutiny is to create a balanced representation on tenant committees to reflect the community we live in.

The scrutiny should cover four areas looking at:

1. Sheltered Home Schemes – looking at how to get them involved
2. Developing participation with housing associations with a possible link into area committees
3. Regenerating interest in tenants participation across the town for all tenants including those in the private sector
4. Identifying housing associations who don't hold tenant participation meetings and look at how information is feedback to their tenants

LM mentioned an Audit Commission report due out in April 2004, which will outline the best ways of engaging participation. TG mentioned inspectors were happy with Luton's current tenant participation structure, which related only to rent payers as stated in the tenants compact and not to private tenants. CA responded by saying TARAs are opened to everyone and memberships of these groups can be quite high.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference were discussed in details in which the following amendments were made:

Objectives	Action
To review the current structure of tenant participation, identifying strengths and weaknesses and examining the findings of the best value review of landlord services	Tenants Consultative Committees to look at strengths already in place and identify weaknesses
To identify and learn from good practice	By using benchmarking – Ed Butler
To identify and address links with the stock options appraisal	The Tenants Consultative Committees is currently revising the tenants compact and – agreed to bring to social inclusion committee for comments before submission to the Executive
To identify and address the interface with Area Committees, and other area based initiatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To look at the possibility of making Tenants Consultative Committees a sub committee to Area Committees. 2. To look at how area committees can link into the Tenants Consultative Committee structure. CA suggested this could be done by looking at the way tenants panels link into Tenants Consultative Committee's
To consider the impact of diversity of tenure	To look at leasing arrangements for housing associations and LBC including private and leasehold tenants.
To consider equality issues and aim to achieve inclusive communities	To look at encouraging hard to reach groups to participate e.g. setting up specialist groups (BME TARAs)
To examine the current level of involvement and best value performance indicators on participation and identify improvements	To look at performance indicators relating to tenants participation – results due out in January 2004 – Ed Butler
To look at opportunities for participation by tenants of housing associations with relatively small stocks in Luton	Look at resident social landlords and private sector landlords e.g. private sector landlord forum

The group discussed having an overarching umbrella to include the LBC TCC and housing associations with a representative from a specialist group (e.g. BME) CA said a weakness identified in the current TCC structure is that they are too big with no portfolios sitting on these committees.

LM suggested a joint venture with the Housing Corporation, who allocates money to housing associations encouraging them to set up tenants participation groups. CA said that if a joint venture were to be made a membership fee would need to be charged if this were to go down the federation route. It was suggested and agreed that a representative from the Housing Corporation be invited to attend a future meeting of this group to discuss how housing associations are encouraged to set up tenants participation groups.

It was further agreed to add a further objective to read ' To investigate the overall aims of tenants participations having a direct line into government'.

4. TENANTS COMPACT

It was agreed that since this document is in the process of being revised by the Tenants Consultative Committee and officers within Housing & Social Services department have cleared the final version, it would then be presented to the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee for comments.

5. BENCHMARKING CLUB

EB to look at the regional impact and how this would link into tenant participation currently in place.

6. ANALYSIS OF MEMBERSHIP

CA tabled the current framework for tenant participation for Luton and questioned whether the current structure captures the young, the elderly and people in sheltered accommodation. EB said that the current issue of 'Housing Matters' a questionnaire is included asking people how they want to be consulted with results being available by December 2003. It was suggested that when monitoring the BVPI 75 (involving harder to reach groups in decision making) that views of wardens should be gained who work closely with the housing department in relation to seeking representation on tenants committees.

7. VISION/VALUES AND STATEMENT

Ed Butler circulated a paper and explained that this was come out of the best value review. The paper was noted as background information.

8. **OPTIONS TO REVIEW WHAT WE DO**
 - a. **GO-EAST/TPAS etc**
 - b. **LOOK AT POSSIBILITY OF TPAS TO RUN A WORKSHOP/BRAINSTORM**

The group agreed to invite five housing associations namely; Presentation, Aldywck, Beds Pilgrims, Circle and one warden control to submit a short briefing paper on their policies and statements in relation to tenant participation to the next working group meeting. It was also agreed to ask the housing associations to identify a representative to become a member of this group. It was also agreed to invite an officer within the social services department and one person from Help the Aged and Age Concern to attend the next meeting. **(Action: John Russell)**

EB agreed to produce a project brief to be produced for the next meeting. **(Action: Ed Butler)**

The group agreed to invite TPAS to a future meeting.

Meeting ended 7.40pm