

To: The Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)
Date: 11 April 2016
Report of: Head of Housing and Property
Title of Report: Tenant Involvement

Summary

Purpose of report: To provide a briefing on the Tenant Involvement function within Housing & Property Services.

Key decision No

Executive lead member: Councillor Mike Rowley

Report author: Simon Warde, Tenant Involvement Manager

Corporate Priorities: Meeting Housing Need; Strong and Active Communities; An Effective and Efficient Council

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Tenant Involvement Activities

Appendix 2 – Resident Feedback

Appendix 3 – Involvement Case Studies

Appendix 4 – Acknowledgements

Appendix 5 – Involvement Focus 2016-17

Introduction

1. This report provides a briefing to Panel Members on the activities of the Tenant Involvement team.
2. The Tenant Involvement team's primary function is to empower and support Oxford City Council tenants and leaseholders towards co-regulation, influencing, developing, monitoring and scrutinising housing related services.

Background

3. In March 2012 the Council commissioned TPAS (the Tenant Participation Advisory Service) to support the setup of a Tenant & Resident Involvement Strategy.
4. The purpose of the Strategy was to embed a culture of involvement, provide a fully flexible approach for residents, limit the time asked of residents and deliver real outcomes in terms of service improvement and value for money.
5. Between March 2012 and October 2012, TPAS, working with a Steering Group consisting of tenants, a leaseholder and staff, generated the Strategy, which was approved by the City Executive Board on 23 November 2012.
6. A detailed action plan was also prepared, aligned with the TPAS Landlord Accreditation.
7. The Tenant Involvement team consists of three full-time staff- the Tenant Involvement Manager and two Tenant Involvement Officers.
8. In addition, the Tenant Involvement Manager also manages the Housing Management Apprentice and the Resident Liaison Coordinator (Tower Block Project).

Day to Day Involvement Activities

9. Tenant Involvement has developed significantly over the last three years. Recruiting and retaining tenants and leaseholders into involvement is often one of the most difficult tasks, but due to some new approaches, the team have seen some considerable success in the number of tenants & leaseholders showing initial interest and then becoming involved in one or more activities.
10. As the opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to become involved have increased, this has empowered them further, meaning they are able to influence a wider range of services and work programmes, become involved in staff recruitment and be a key stakeholder in contract procurement.
11. The involvement activities which are now a day to day part of the service are set out in Appendix 1 – Tenant Involvement Activities.
12. Although many aspects of involvement clearly have great benefits to tenants and leaseholders, e.g. training, system testing, tours and newsletters, these activities can be difficult to measure and we are often reliant on feedback. Feedback from involved tenants is set out in Appendix 2 – Resident Feedback
13. Other involvement activities have a clearer outcome and the true benefits are easier to record. These are set out in Appendix 3 – Involvement Case Studies

Promotion of Service

14. As the success of involvement activities has progressed, the Involvement Team have been publicising the success of working closely with customers through internal messages, team meetings across the Council, Council Matters and in the Tenants' Newsletter.

Acknowledgements

15. In January 2016, the Tenant Involvement Team were awarded the TPAS Landlord Accreditation, only the third Local Authority to receive the award, which comprises a review of 26 Themes and over 99 individual expected involvement outcomes. More details about the Accreditation and other acknowledgements are set out in Appendix 4 – Acknowledgements.

Involved Tenants and Leaseholders

16. As part of this report, it must be recognised that without the tenants and leaseholders, involvement and co-regulation would not happen. The hard work and dedication of the tenants and leaseholders who give up their spare time to help shape future services and priorities deserves special mention.

Work Plan Focus 2016-17

17. As the elements of the original Strategy and action plan are now embedded as day to day activities, the main focus of the Tenant Involvement Team has shifted to using the activities and tools to support involvement in housing related activities across the Council. The key elements of focus for 2016-17 are set out in Appendix 5 – Involvement Focus 2016-17.

Next steps – The Committee is asked to note the report, provide comment and to consider when to receive a further update.

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List of background papers: None

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