

Appendix 3 – Involvement Case Studies

Rent Arrears Escalation Process

The Incomes Team (Rents) were keen to review the Arrears Escalation Process. They approached the Tenant Involvement team to support the review and generate feedback to help influence changes to this process.

The Tenant Involvement team developed a workshop and invited tenants to participate. The existing arrears process was presented to tenants, showing when and how Oxford City Council communicated with tenants in rent arrears. The involved tenants then had the opportunity to change the ordering of when and how they were communicated with.

The second part of the workshop involved our tenants reviewing the text of correspondence sent out to tenants during the rent arrears process. This enabled the tenants to edit the text and remove non-essential jargon to make the letters clearer and more engaging.

As an outcome of this review, Oxford City Council now communicates verbally with tenants at an earlier stage of the process, rather than simply issuing standard letters. In addition, a new traffic light warning system has been added to the arrears letters, making the arrears stage clearer to the tenants.

Tower Block Consultation

As part of the Tower Block Refurbishment Programme, the Tenant Involvement team were commissioned to consult with the resident base on some of the programmes' priorities and influence the final design.

To ensure the consultation was inclusive, the team ran drop-in events at community facilities very close to each of the five blocks, carried out door step surveys and generated online surveys.

The team collated all of the feedback from each of the consultation methods and generated a report of their findings. The findings were initially present to the Project team and then the Project Board.

As an outcome of this consultation, the residents influenced works such as garden rooms & balconies and the final design of the five tower blocks.

Editorial Panel

Within the pages of the quarterly Tenants in Touch publication is the 'Have Your Say' section. This acts as a prompt for tenants & leaseholders to both provide feedback on services or current issues, as well as show an interest in Tenant Involvement activities.

Although the form included a prepaid return envelope, minimal responses were being received. This concern was presented to the tenants on the Editorial Panel to make suggestions. After some discussion, the panel recommended that the form should be included in the publication but loose from the pages, believing that tenants & leaseholders would be more likely to act and take the time to respond.

The outcome of this change has resulted in the responses increasing in each of the last three editions. We are now receiving approximately three times the amount of responses compared to before the change was made.

Tenant Interview Panel

In the last twelve months, Landlord Services has advertised two new posts, a Leaseholder Management Officer and a Resident Liaison Co-ordinator.

The Tenant Involvement team ensured that tenants & leaseholders formed part of the recruitment process by being involved in either a stakeholder or interview panel. The Tenant Involvement team worked with the Council's HR team to train the residents on interviewing skills, assisting them in their new role.

The tenants & leaseholders were able to ask questions during the interviews and feed back on the candidates' responses. The outcome being that the tenants & leaseholders were able to directly influence which candidate the Oxford City Council employed.

The Oxford Standard

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) carried out a joint review with the Housing Panel on the Oxford Standard (Decent Homes plus).

Not only did Tenant Involvement support the TSP through this process, but the joint panel commissioned the Tenant Involvement team to consult with tenants on their priorities for improvement works to their homes, as well as the specification of those works.

The Tenant Involvement team carried out six days of doorstep surveys across the city. This was followed by two consultation events being held and an online consultation survey being made available.

The Tenant Involvement team collated the results from various surveys and presented the findings to the joint Panel.

The Joint Scrutiny Panel presented their recommendations to the City Executive Board. The outcome was that the Oxford Standard was approved, including over 30 individual elements that were improvements on the previous Decent Home Standard.

Local Offers

As part of the Tenant & Resident Involvement Strategy, Oxford City Council is committed to deliver Local Offers.

The Tenant Involvement team setup a Local Offer Working Group (LOWG) made up of tenants, who would then support the creation of such offers. The LOWG first decided on three services they wanted to have Local Offers. These were Repairs, Planned Maintenance and Anti-Social Behaviour services.

The LOGW worked with senior managers responsible for these three service areas and negotiated a set of measures & targets that the service areas would become responsible for delivering as their “Offer” to tenants.

This result was that the LOGW successfully negotiated a series of measures & targets with all three services and three Local Offers were drafted.

All three Local Offers were approved by the City Executive Board. Regular updates on performance against the Local Offers are provided by the service areas and a final report on the performance against the Local Offers will be provided jointly by the LOWG and the service areas, to be published in the summer 2016 issue of Tenants in Touch.

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