

**To: City Executive Board.**

**Date: 23rd November 2012.**

**Report of: Executive Director, Community Services and Executive  
Director, City Regeneration.**

**Title of Report: Tenant and Resident Involvement Review.**

## **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To recommend a new strategy for involvement that will achieve best practice, meet regulatory requirements and the aspirations of tenants. This follows a review of current involvement of tenants/leaseholders in Oxford City Council by the Tenant Participation and Advisory Service (TPAS).

**Key decision No**

**Executive lead member: Councillor Scott Seamons**

**Policy Framework: Corporate Priorities –  
Strong and Active Communities and Meeting  
Housing Need.**

**Recommendation(s):**

- 1. To approve the proposed Tenant and Resident Involvement strategy 'Keeping Customers and Communities at the Heart of what we do'**
- 2. To approve the action plan for implementation.**

### **Appendices to report –**

Appendix 1: Regulatory Standards

Appendix 2: Results of consultation with Tenants/Leaseholders July 2012

Appendix 3: Keeping Customers and Communities at the Heart of What We Do

Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 5: Risk register

## General Background

1. The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) were commissioned in March 2012 by Oxford City Council to review its Involvement Strategy in order to ensure a more outcome focused approach that provides a link for residents' aspirations straight into the Corporate Objectives.
2. As one of the first organisations to specialise in tenant and resident involvement at a national level, TPAS aim to join up government policy with front-line service delivery and grassroots tenants' groups. The TPAS vision is "Connecting People to achieve great communities" and this vision is stringently applied to their work with tenants and landlords nationally.
3. The objective was that with both the changes in the Government regulatory frame work and the organisational changes for the Housing Service within the City Council, the Tenant and Leaseholder Compact 2007 needed to be reviewed and a new involvement strategy needed to be developed and implemented.

## Regulatory Background

4. Part of the context for this review of tenant and resident involvement is the new system for the regulation of social housing introduced in 2010 and since revised to take effect from April 2012.

The original six national standards are now known as either consumer standards or economic standards. Consumer standards are to do with all the housing services received by residents and applicants for housing.

Changes to consumer standards from the 2010 framework relevant to this review include the cross cutting:

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard with:

- a greater focus on local mechanisms to resolve complaints and disputes
- an increased scope for more tenant involvement in repairs and maintenance
- retained principles of 'local offers' and annual reporting to tenants

5. The principle of co-regulation means;

"Boards and councillors who govern providers' service delivery are responsible for meeting the standards and being transparent and accountable for their organisation's delivery of its social housing objectives."

The co-regulatory principles underpin the regulatory approach. Registered providers are required to meet the relevant standards. It is for providers to support tenants both to shape and scrutinise service delivery and to hold boards and councillors to account. In cases where breach or potential

breach of a consumer standard leads to risk of serious detriment to tenants, the regulator may intervene.

6. Co-regulation is different to the previous system of regulation in how it defines the roles of each of the parties involved in it. Under co-regulation, the role of the Housing Regulator is to set clear, outcome-related<sup>1</sup> standards for social housing. On consumer standards, the role of a Registered Provider and its residents is then to work together to achieve the required housing service standards.

The Regulatory Framework sets out *six general principles*, which are relevant to this review:

- Boards and Councillors are responsible and accountable for delivering their organisation’s social housing objectives
  - Registered Providers must meet the applicable regulatory standards
  - Transparency and accountability is central to co-regulation
  - Tenants should have opportunities to shape service delivery and to hold the responsive Board or Councillors to account (including having “the ability to scrutinise their provider’s performance, identify areas for improvement and influence future delivery”)
  - A Registered Provider should understand the particular needs of its tenants (its “approaches to management and service delivery must incorporate and demonstrate principles of equality and diversity”)
  - Value for money goes to the heart of how a Registered Provider ensures current and future delivery of its objectives
7. The specific requirements of the Regulatory Standards that are most relevant to this review of tenant and resident involvement at Oxford City Council are set out in the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard – with separate standards for customer service, choice and complaints and understanding and responding to diverse needs. The detail of the Regulatory Standards is included in Appendix 1.
  8. The new Tenant and Resident Involvement Strategy will be aligned with the TPAS Landlord Accreditation framework and the Terms of Reference for the new Strategy were that it:
    - Meets Regulatory and statutory requirements following recent changes.
    - Meets tenant and resident priorities and needs, utilising current information held from previous consultation and feedback obtained from consultation during July/August 2012
    - Is benchmarked with best practice
    - Is aligned with the TPAS Resident Involvement Quality Standards.
      - Should tenant led scrutiny be developed as recommended then this will be aligned with the Quality Assured Scrutiny Standards

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<sup>1</sup> Outcome-related means the standards are concerned with results, not with setting out in detail what processes have to be followed to achieve these results

(developed by TPAS, Chartered Institute of Housing and Housemark).

- Meets the aspirations of Oxford City Council;;
  - A simple structure which through implementation builds stronger relationships between residents and Oxford City Council
  - Adaptable to the reorganisation of the Housing Service,
  - To provide a route for tenants to be part of the Governance structure
  - To review accessibility of tenants to resources e.g. tenant resource centre at Horspath Road.
  - Ensure involvement is the vehicle to provide for real influence for tenants and leaseholders.
  - Enables broad engagement opportunities across all demographics and geographical areas of the City.
  - Is a clear recognition that tenants and leaseholders exist as residents in areas of mixed tenure and problem solving or the driving of initiatives cannot always be delivered successfully within narrowly defined groups.
  - Will enable engagement opportunities that are imaginative and varied allowing tenants, residents and leaseholders to be involved as much or as little as they wish and in ways that suit their needs and the needs of the task in hand.
  - Proper thought and consideration of the lead in times for tenants, residents and leaseholders to decide if they wish to or can be engaged in processes accompanied by good communications and networking to ensure that messages reach the widest audience.
  - Develop good training, support opportunities and encouragement to the widest audience.
  - Encouragement and support for the setting of local engagement structures based in communities and operated by communities.
  - Ensure that structures do not allow for one group, issue or process to be or become dominant and provide structures that are not hierarchical or get in the way of individuals or groups expressing their views clearly to those managing services or allocating resources.
  - Enables opportunities for tenants, residents and leaseholders to see on a regular basis the details of the difference that has been made as a result of their engagement.
  - Enables transparency in the operation and outcomes of the service with tenants, residents and leaseholder requests and questions being answered in a timely fashion.
  - Confirms clear commitments from all to keep the strategy and more importantly the influence it delivers fresh, healthy and in line with the requirements of all.
  - Enables effective Tenant Scrutiny arrangements to be actively encouraged and supported.

9. The initial phase of the project was to review Tenant and Resident Involvement arrangements and Phase 2 of the project will be to develop the Tenants Scrutiny of Housing services.

### **TPAS programme of work**

10. An initial review was carried out by TPAS during March/April 2012. It involved:
  - Reading through documentation relating to tenant and resident involvement
  - Reading through tenant and resident feedback from December 2011 and March 2012 Local Offer consultations
  - Meeting both Tenant and Resident Involvement & Equalities officers in post over the period of the review
  - Meeting the Communities and Neighbourhoods Manager, Landlord Services Manager, Principal Scrutiny Officer, Equalities Manager and Corporate Director for Housing.
  - Meeting with the Involvement Monitoring Group (IMP) and meeting with the Chair and Vice-Chair.
  - Attendance at Housing Scrutiny Panel, Landlord Services Board and also Local Offers workshop.
11. As a key part of this project TPAS felt it important to work with a key group of tenants, residents and officers. It was agreed to establish this group at the Landlord Services Board on 18 April 2012. The aim of this group being:
  - To help design the consultation programme with the wider community
  - To help shape a final tenant and resident involvement strategy ready for approval

TPAS supports the principles of giving every eligible tenant and resident opportunities to put themselves forward. It was important that, clear information was provided to tenants and residents, setting out the role, expectations, limitations, and available support and development opportunities for successful candidates. It was agreed to invite tenants from the Involvement database to apply to be part of the Steering Group and a key part of the review.

The final Steering Group would consist of 4 members of staff and 4 tenants/leaseholders with TPAS as Independent Chair. The first meeting was held on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012 and 5 further meetings were held after this.

Applicants were interviewed against the person specification by a TPAS lead Associate, ensuring independence, alongside the Equalities and Diversity Officer for Oxford, which was requested by the Involvement Monitoring Panel (IMP). Four Tenants were recruited.

The Officers on the Steering Group were: Communities & Neighbourhoods Manager, Landlord Services Manager, Equalities & Diversity Officer and the Principal Scrutiny Officer.

The Tenants and Officers steering group worked with TPAS to:

- Design the consultation
- Consider its findings
- Consider the draft strategy and structure
- Consider its' future role for strategy implementation

## **Current Involvement**

12. The tenant and resident involvement structure that is current at Oxford City Council since the last TPAS desktop review in 2007, is the Involvement Monitoring Panel (IMP) which has been in operation since 2004.

Tenants and Leaseholders have been recruited (co-opted from IMP) to a non voting resident place at the Housing Scrutiny Committee level and a place on the Landlord Services Board.

Currently IMP meet monthly to:

- Assist in the management of the tenant and leaseholder resource centre
- Appoint representatives onto the Housing Scrutiny Panel and Landlord Services Board
- To make recommendations on budget issues
- To work with OCC and others for the benefit of all tenants and leaseholders
- To work towards involving more tenants and leaseholders
- To help solve any complaints

Current membership is 9 with 7 vacant seats.

13. Tenants and Residents Associations (TRA) are groups who represent a defined area, often a neighbourhood street or flats, and are usually made up of members who are residents, tenants and leaseholders. These groups help drive changes and improvements to the local area. There are 8 currently in operation. These groups are supported by a small grant to assist in their running.

14. The OCC Tenant Involvement Officers support the development and involvement of residents, tenants and leaseholders through:

- Attending and supporting TRA meetings and activities
- Organising focus groups, events, workshops e.g. local offers, Starcatchers (tenants talent show), roadshows
- Training – IT skills, governance (chairing skills), money matters
- Youth initiatives
- Estate Walkabouts and supporting local initiatives e.g. cleaner, greener campaigns
- Supporting new tenants groups – e.g. sheltered housing

- Mystery shopping – recruiting and training tenants and residents
  - Supporting applications to fund environmental and security projects from the environmental improvement budget
15. The Tenants Resource Centre is at Horspath Road and has facilities for tenants to use including a meeting room, an IT suite, photocopying facilities. Officers provide direct support for two sessions per week. Current data shows that from April – September 2012 only 21 tenants visits were recorded.

**Analysis of current involvement**

16. TPAS analysed the current involvement of tenants/leaseholders and residents. They concluded that while there are some real strengths with some aspects of OCC involvement of tenants, residents and leaseholders, key gaps have emerged from this review and are addressed below

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed and skilled core group of residents and staff</li> <li>• Corporate buy in to really improve opportunities for resident involvement</li> <li>• Coherence/consistency between strategy and activities on paper</li> <li>• Value for Money awareness</li> <li>• Equality &amp; Diversity awareness</li> <li>• Already linked into external projects/training/other stakeholders</li> <li>• Some Residents, predominately leaseholders already have experience of scrutiny-related activities</li> <li>• Very strong community development work- area based forums, neighbourhood partnerships tackling local issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-regulation issues and clear gaps need to be strengthened to meet regulatory requirements</li> <li>• Capacity issue around embracing and developing Tenant and Resident Leadership</li> <li>• Too few young/ working residents involved, lack of involvement from some key areas</li> <li>• Limited use of social media as an alternative engagement technique</li> <li>• Communication generally landlord to resident, not enough resident to resident</li> <li>• Slim resident involvement structure in place which need to be expanded to include resident led scrutiny and complaints and locality based opportunities</li> <li>• Stronger basics to be put in place such as feedback on key issues to residents where OCC can demonstrate resident influence</li> <li>• Lack of clear route to decision making process</li> <li>• Tenants Resource Centre not well used and needs to be</li> </ul>

	reviewed in terms of value for money.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement is seen as a driver for improvement</li> <li>• To develop Resident-led scrutiny and separate from member led scrutiny</li> <li>• A good start on development of Local Offers and an opportunity here to link to local groups</li> <li>• Make roadshows even better - overcome geography, put residents in touch with one another</li> <li>• New residents coming forward as a result of recent roadshows and outreach activities by Officers</li> <li>• A developing Involvement database</li> <li>• To develop more informal and creative involvement methods by way of a toolbox</li> <li>• Build up more diversity data to guide involvement activity</li> <li>• Develop a forum for Leaseholder Voice as an interest group</li> <li>• Develop mystery shopping further with clear links to service improvement as a result</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A real sense of issues around trust between some tenants and OCC.</li> <li>• A model Resident Involvement structure including governance documents must be developed as part of this review- issues that have been the focus of recent meetings can be avoided in the future with key documentation in place</li> <li>• Lack of role specification for resident roles on OCC Boards - need to develop clear and distinct roles</li> <li>• Need to ensure no duplication in roles</li> <li>• Main IMP group members sitting on other key groups highlights lack of capacity among other residents or lack of awareness of roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Unresolved tensions over future direction of tenant scrutiny and concern over link to Scrutiny Committees</li> <li>• Residents on current structures over-burdened by too many demands</li> <li>• A perception that Resident led scrutiny should be added to member led scrutiny</li> </ul>

## Consultation

17. There have been a number of key events involving tenants, residents and leaseholders:

(i) Tenant and Leaseholder road shows December 2011

The events were held across 5 areas of the city;

- Wood Farm, Barton, Rose Hill, Blackbird Leys, Town Hall



Overall 100 tenants attended with 50 completed surveys. Feedback from those residents who attended have been taken into account and for those who indicated that they were interested in getting more involved they have been added to the involvement database. The key findings were:

- For OCC to improve how they publicise future involvement events and to hold more local events using a range of different methods,
- Tenants and residents are interested in monitoring and reviewing housing services with a number of residents who want to be involved in the future recruited.
- Tenants and residents wanted more training
- For OCC to provide a flexible and supportive approach to tenants and residents who want to be involved and key priorities are that involvement should be;
  - Local
  - Relevant
  - Innovative
  - Collaborative
  - Representative

(ii) Summary of Findings from Local Offer consultation event March 2012.

22 Tenants and residents attended and as a result OCC Local Offers were drafted for further development, all offers containing a number of sub offers under each heading;

The quality of your home  
Doing repairs to your home  
Rents and Service charges  
Maintaining Communal areas  
Dealing with ASB  
Customer Service  
Financial Management  
Involvement

The final Local Offers were sent to all Tenants and Residents for comment and the final version agreed.

18. Through the TPAS steering group a consultation survey was developed and designed to go to all tenants, residents and leaseholders. This was to ascertain views on priorities, the level of interest in getting more involved and how they wanted to be consulted/involved in housing and other issues.
19. It was a postal survey but was also made available online. The consultation was approved by the OCC consultation project board.
20. The survey was issued to all Oxford City Council tenant and leasehold households (8367) in June/July 2012.

21. A total of 622 responses were completed and returned to TPAS for analysis. This represented a 7.4% response rate. A further 14 were completed online. The sample (636 respondents) is 7.6 % total response rate subject to a maximum standard error of 3.7% at 95% confidence level. Therefore, we can be 95% confident that responses are representative of the total population (8367 households), to within 3.7% of the percentages reported. The results are included as Appendix 2.

## Results and way forward

22. From all the background data, desktop research and interviews/meetings attended by TPAS and the consultation carried out over the last 12 months, a revised strategy has been developed by TPAS for consideration.

The key drivers in developing this strategy have been:

- Evolving internal structures and approach
- Tenant and resident aspirations for involvement and influence
- Changing external regulation
- TPAS accreditation for Resident Involvement Quality

23. The strategy is included as Appendix 3: Keeping Customers and Communities at the Heart of What We Do

The term '**Resident**' is used throughout the new strategy to represent tenants, leaseholders, advocates or any other customer of our services. Many areas of the City have mixed tenure i.e. OCC housing, Housing Associations, private, rented. Residents have many similar needs related to the place where they live e.g. community safety, environmental issues and so these will be addressed by working with local residents. Where a particular item is only relevant to a specific client group they will be referred to as such (e.g. 'tenants' or 'leaseholders').

The strategy recognises that Oxford is made up of many diverse communities and commits to ensuring that all tenants, residents and leaseholders have equality of access and are able to have a say if they want to. We know that barriers exist which prevent people from becoming involved and this leads to certain groups being under-represented in involvement activities. The Choice working group will therefore develop and monitor a 'need to reach strategy' aimed at broadening the diversity of involvement and ensuring that those underrepresented through involvement have opportunities to influence what we do (this could involve developing specific 'community of interest groups', subject to demand).

24. The strategy was developed by TPAS through
- Analysis of the consultation
  - Considering a number of best practise examples (co-regulation)
  - Developing an approach for Oxford that:
    - Embeds a culture of involvement

- Provides a fully flexible approach for residents
- Limits the time asked of residents
- Delivers real outcomes in terms of service improvement and value for money

25. The key aspects of the strategy are:

The establishment of an independent scrutiny panel that will:

- Work on behalf of all Tenants and Leaseholders of Oxford City Council
- Provide an independent check of the services provided by Oxford City Council
- Challenge the delivery of services and the performance, making recommendations for improvements in:
  - service delivery; performance and efficiency; resident satisfaction

There will be standard task teams which will:

- Consist of a database of interested tenants and residents who have expressed interest in a specific area of service
- Operate on a 'task and finish' basis, utilising the Tool Box
- Be the overall responsibility of the relevant Housing Board Member who will set targets to involve residents in:
  - Decision-making; Shaping and developing services; Scrutinising and monitoring performance; Complaints
- Provide opportunities for:
  - Information; Consultation; Participation; Empowerment

Local Involvement:

The fully flexible approach to involvement through the new structure ensures that tenants, residents and leaseholders can be involved to the degree and level they choose, accessing involvement opportunities that influence decisions affecting all tenants or those which focus more locally on neighbourhood decision-making. The strategy seeks to build on the work undertaken to develop local offers by engaging with tenants and residents at neighbourhood level to develop and agree neighbourhood involvement plans. These plans will focus on what is most important to local people and provide opportunities (using the tool box activities) for tenants, residents and leaseholders to exercise meaningful influence over local services.

26. A detailed action plan is included as part of the Tenants and Residents Involvement Strategy and these actions have been designed by TPAS to enable Oxford City Council to achieve the Landlord Accreditation of which there are 27 units containing 99 standards.

The initial tasks will be:

Date	Actions
December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish strategy and summary document</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit tenants/leaseholders to an Involvement and Empowerment task team to establish the tenant steering group chaired by TPAS to develop approach to tenant led scrutiny</li> <li>• Create a Local Offers task team led by Landlord Service Manager to review and monitor current local offer and to provide performance monitoring across the service</li> <li>• End current structures for tenants/leaseholders involvement on a city-wide basis</li> <li>• Plan launch event for recruiting to standard task teams</li> <li>• Meet with relevant Heads of Service to agree task teams and relevant input</li> <li>• Review Tenants Resource Centre and explore alternatives to supporting tenants</li> </ul>
January/February 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress tenant scrutiny work through task team</li> <li>• Publish toolbox of activities and promote to tenants and residents to ensure up to date database</li> <li>• Set up task teams for Anti-Social Behaviour and Repairs</li> <li>• Training for tenants and residents interested in tenant-led scrutiny</li> </ul>
March/April 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake Tenant and Resident Involvement roadshows promoting strategy and involvement activities</li> <li>• Set up tenant-led scrutiny panel</li> </ul>

27. Implementation will involve a focussed programme of activities led by Housing Landlord Services but supported by Communities and Neighbourhoods. TPAS will continue to support phase 2 of the project to deliver tenant scrutiny. It is also proposed to appoint to a post for a year to drive and coordinate implementation and ensure delivery. It should be noted that success is also dependent on all front-line services engaging with the new arrangements. Funding has been identified from the HRA to support delivery.

28. Climate change / environmental impact

Throughout the strategy action plan we will make sure that actions take account of Oxford City Councils commitment to reducing its carbon footprint.

29. Equalities impact - included as Appendix 4.

### 30. Financial implications

The proposed activities documented in the report can be funded by re-alignment of existing resources to include support for the Independent Scrutiny Panel. Funding of the temporary post -part year (January 2013 - March 2013) can be contained within the existing 2012-13 Budget.

There is flexibility of approach to the 2013-14 Budget and it is envisaged that the part year funding (April 2013 - January 2014) for the temporary post can be found by re-aligning existing resources.

### 31. Legal implications

Regulatory requirements for registered providers of social housing are set out by the Tenant Services Authority in its Regulatory Framework for Social Housing which came into effect in April 2010.

Responsibility for regulating social housing passed to the Homes and Communities Agency in April 2012. The strategy is based on the principle of co-regulation where there is a clear role for tenants to scrutinise performance.

### 32. Level of risk - a risk register is appended as Appendix 5.

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#### **List of background papers:**

**Version number: 1**

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