



Item No.

15

Ward/s

<b>Name of Group:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> December 2006
<b>Directorate:</b>	People, Performance & Regeneration
<b>Corporate Manager:</b>	Christopher Cavanagh
<b>Cabinet Meeting Date</b>	19th December 2006
<b>Agenda Status:</b>	Public

<b>Report Title</b>	Making a difference - Strategy for tenant involvement and tenant participation agreement
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<b>Key Decision -</b>	Approve the Strategy and Agreement	<b>YES</b>
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## 1. Recommendations

Approve the strategy for tenant involvement and its accompanying agreement (compact) between tenants, leaseholders and the Council . The agreement also forms an outline implementation plan.

This agreement being subject to formal confirmation that the strategy can be fully contained within existing resources and future resource levels as outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## 2. Summary

The strategy sets out the approach for tenant involvement with Housing Services, taking into account links to other policy areas such as the Corporate priorities, the Council's housing strategy, the Community Vision and Neighbourhood Management.

There are three key objectives of the strategy: 1. To ensure as a social landlord that our services operate within the principles of Best Practice, 2. Providing a framework for how tenants will be kept informed, consulted and involved, and 3. An overview of how the performance of the housing service

can be monitored with the involvement of tenants.

The strategy outlines a range of ways that tenants can be involved in influencing the housing service to meet the involvement and communication preferences that different people have, and to ensure these are as inclusive as possible.

Section 7 specifically focuses on steps that the Council needs to take to ensure that hard to reach groups of people can be encouraged and supported to take part and influence the housing services that they receive.

The strategy includes a diagram to illustrate how tenants and leaseholders can influence and be part of the continuous improvement of housing services. Northampton Council does not work in isolation and section 6 highlights the importance of working in partnership with other agencies.

The final section of the strategy outlines the various ways that the strategy can be monitored to demonstrate and measure the impact that tenant involvement has had on housing services.

### **3. Report Background**

Audit Commission Inspectors highlighted the need for the Council to review its Tenant Pledge, (also known as a compact) which is the agreement with tenants and leaseholders about how they will be informed, consulted and involved in housing issues. This was originally produced with tenants in 2001. The Inspectors also highlighted the need for an overarching strategy for tenant involvement. A specialist tenant involvement consultant was appointed to undertake this work in April 2006.

The review of the strategy and Pledge has involved a working group of tenants and staff, briefing sessions for Councillors, survey of tenants and leaseholders via Housing Matters and internal and external consultation. Following Cabinet approval, the strategy and agreement will be launched in January 2007.

### **4. Options and Evaluation of Options**

There was no option to not do this activity, and the authority did not have the capacity to undertake the work in house.

### **5. Resource Implications (including Financial Implications)**

The funding (£15,000) to meet the costs of the consultant who has developed the Strategy and Pledge was secured from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now the Department for Communities and Local Government). This funding sits within the Housing Revenue Account. It is estimated that the additional budget required to implement the recommendations contained in the Pledge would be £3,500 in 2006-07 and 15,000 in 2007-08.

The implementation of the Strategy and Pledge will result in an increase in tenant engagement that will require additional resources.

There is a specific budget for tenant involvement and this will need to be reviewed with tenants on an annual basis to ensure adequate funding for tenant involvement activity.

## 6. Risk and Opportunity Issues

### Risks:

- Poor inspection assessment if strategy update is not implemented
- Lack of engagement with and feedback to tenants and leaseholders about how they have influenced housing services is likely to result in apathy and under involvement.

### Opportunities:

- Opportunity to be one of the best performers in engaging tenants with customer focused housing services. As a result this will improve the Council's reputation via the results from the Customer Satisfaction Survey that the council undertakes,
- Increased satisfaction with services as a result of increased involvement and understanding about the housing service

## 7. Consultees (Internal and External)

<b>Internal</b>	All Councillors and all staff
<b>External</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tenants on Sounding Board</li><li>• N-TACT Committee members</li><li>• Tenants and Residents Associations</li><li>• Federation of Residents Associations</li><li>• Leaseholder Panel</li><li>• Northampton Area Partnerships</li><li>• Northampton Borough forums for: Disabled; Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual; Pensioners, Youth; Race Equality; Women's</li><li>• Northamptonshire County Council – Julia Tinker, Northampton Strategic Neighbourhood Management Manager</li></ul>

## **8. Compliance Issues**

### **A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes**

#### **Recovery Plan**

There are direct links to supporting our Improvement Plan in respect to ensuring and enabling Tenant engagement in supporting housing services to address those elements of services identified within the Recovery Plan.

#### **Corporate Plan**

There are distinct and clear links all of the Corporate Plan priorities, but in particular to the 2<sup>nd</sup> detailing: Improve Northampton's housing

### **B: Other Implications**

#### **Other Strategies**

There are links to strategies for Equality and Diversity, Housing, Neighbourhood Management and Customer Care.

#### **Finance Comments**

The Tenant Participation budget currently stands at £16k, the majority of which relates to professional services. Any further funding required will need a business case.

#### **Legal Comments**

This strategy acknowledges the legal requirements and statutory instruments and guidance for consultation and involvement of tenants within the 1985 Housing Act, Housing (Right to manage) Regulation 1994, The National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts (DCLG), subsequent Audit Commission recommendations and the October 2006 Government White paper 'Strong and prosperous communities'. Its aim is to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives.

#### **Crime and Disorder Issues**


By engaging tenants in the development of and addressing current service issues, the principles of Designing out Crime both in service development and also materials/environmental enhancement programmes are addressed.

#### **Equality Impact Assessments**

An initial assessment has been undertaken with the assistance of a specialist Housing Equality and Diversity consultant. Although this initial assessment does not advise that a full EIA is required it does include recommendations for a partial EIA and makes many helpful comments to assist on the future implementation of the strategy that will be presented to N-TACT. The partial EIA will be undertaken with N-TACT and the outcomes will be built into the tenant participation strategy implementation plan.

## 9. Background Papers

Title	Description	Source

Name	Signature	Date	Ext.
Author	Carole Amer/Sean Silver	13.12.06	7836
Corporate Manager	Chris Cavanagh	13.12.06	
Director	Clive Thomas	13.12.06	
Monitoring Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)	 Francis Fernandes	15.12.06	7335
Section 151 Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)	Bill Lewis		