

Progress Report from residents' Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) to Housing Management Board, 2011/'12

Presented by: Chair of Housing Regulation Panel, Mr. Stan Best

1. HRP's positive practice achievements

1.1 After Housing Management Board approved the setting up of residents' Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) in 2010, the HRP residents went on to work out for themselves the detail of how they would approach and implement inspections of service-areas. The methodology and documents that they developed (Appendices 2 and 3) are now receiving praise from national agencies. In 2011 residents from HRP and the Housing Management Board gave presentations on these co-regulation methods at agencies like the Chartered Institute of Housing and Housemark.

1.2 With ongoing support from the Resident Involvement service, HRP in 2011 carried out a first and very successful year of co-regulation activity. HMB are encouraged to examine Appendices 2 and 3 in particular as detailed concrete illustrations of HRP's inspection activities in 2011.

2. Methodology of Housing Regulation Panel's Inspections

- HRP's role is to verify that services are being delivered to the service standard already set by the Council for that service area (not to request service-improvements that exceed the resources available).
- To help select which service-areas to prioritise for inspection, HRP use performance information, survey-results, customer satisfaction information and complaints trends.
- The Panel create a forward plan of inspections they intend to do, keeping it flexible to respond to changing priorities.
- In 2011, HRP did a major inspection of a large service, the Communal Cleaning service provided to blocks of flats on the Council's housing estates by Streets and Open Spaces in the Environment Directorate.
- For this inspection HRP did unannounced, on-site inspections on 58% of the 91 blocks of flats involved, graded them on quality of service, and had eight formal meetings with the service-managers.

3. Outcomes and achievements of HRP's Communal Cleaning Inspection

3.1 HRP produced a formal Report of their findings with the following specific recommendations for areas that needed to improve in order to meet the Council's own service standard (Appendix 3 is the full Report):

- “The standard of communal cleaning needs to be consistent across the city.
- The cleaning notices should be displayed in all locations.
- The cleaners should make full use of the equipment they are provided with.
- A deep clean at Hawkins Road must be done.
- When cover is needed for sickness and annual leave, the cleaning should be done to meet the agreed service standard.
- The procedure for cleaners to report issues (obstructions and damage) which prevent them from carrying out their duties in full should be used much more robustly and monitored.”

3.2 This Report became an agreement signed by HRP and service-managers, for the relevant improvements to be delivered within agreed timescales up to October 2011. HRP held high-level meetings with Heads of Service and a Director to ensure the service-improvements would be delivered.

3.3 The broad findings and recommendations of HRP’s inspection, approved by service-managers, were published in their article in Open Door magazine in summer 2011 (Appendix 4).

4. Additional information

4.1 At the January 2012 meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee, a report recommended that the Communal Cleaning service undergo a hard market-testing process in the months ahead. The Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources approved the recommendation.

4.2 Meanwhile, HRP are starting their next inspection on the Caretaking Service provided by City Homes to certain blocks of flats on Council estates. This is expected to be a quicker and easier inspection, as it is a much smaller service-area. Across 2012 HRP will proceed with further monitoring and inspecting of service-areas that have been highlighted by feedback from the wider tenant body.

5. Housing Regulation Panel’s communication lines with other residents and with HMB

- HRP began their year’s work with a Freepost survey in Open Door magazine, to ascertain how tenants and leaseholders prioritise the landlord-related services that they receive.
- HRP also draw ongoing feedback from the specialist residents’ groups that work with the Council on services like repairs, gas, leaseholds, publications, etc. (Appendix 5). (These groups driven by a challenge from

residents are in addition to the landlord's own customer meetings, such as Southside Partnership, Leaseholder Forum, Community Days, etc.)

- Quarterly updates from HRP go to all tenants and leaseholders in Open Door magazine.
- The six elected residents of HMB are invited to join the residents' Panel at quarterly Residents' Performance Monitoring Sessions where they monitor performance trends.
- All these resident representatives have access to the Housemark website where benchmarking information is compared across social landlords, and have resident membership of TPAS (the independent Tenant Participation Advisory Service).
- As recommended by the 2011 report to HMB on the Independent Review of Resident Involvement, resident representatives are receiving extensive training and support, both from independent conferences and in-house from the Resident Involvement office.
- HRP will continue to bring annual progress reports to HMB, with interim reports if the need arises.

6. Recruitment ahead in 2012

6.1 National guidance recommends that residents' inspection panels are recruited by nurturing interested residents and selecting them based on aptitude, rather than through elections (which are more appropriate for resident roles on democratic decision-making boards that receive significant financial allowances, like HMB). As was hoped would happen at the outset, a founding resident of HRP went on to stand for HMB's 2012 tenant elections, aiming to 'graduate' on to HMB and help represent the voice of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents on the Board.

6.2 Meanwhile several capable, newly-involved tenants, including younger and BME tenants, are working with the Resident Involvement office with a view to being trained as resident inspectors. A recruitment drive, well advertised through Open Door magazine and other channels, will be held in summer 2012. In the current climate of unemployment, these new resident involvement roles can offer training, experience and transferable skills that can be a real asset in a challenging employment market.