

Report of the Assistant Director – Legal & Governance

Cover Report Tenant Involvement

Summary

1. This report provides the Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee with an update on tenant involvement in the City of York, following a recommendation in the last municipal year, from the previous Committee, that this Committee following the local elections in May 2019 should revisit this topic.

Background

2. Following a topic request by Cllr Ann Reid in November 2018, this Committee was presented with a feasibility report into what more the City of York Council could do to encourage more tenants and residents associations, following the collapse of York Residents Federation.
3. In the November meeting, two views emerged, some Members expressed a view that other topics took priority, while other Members regarded a review into tenant involvement was timely.
4. Members agreed that there was insufficient time left in the municipal year to embark on a review into tenant involvement, however Members asked officers to bring an overview report into tenant involvement to a future meeting.
5. Then in March 2019, Members considered the information to potentially warrant future work in this area and therefore requested officers to bring back a further report in the new Municipal Year.
6. Members agreed that there was sufficient content in the report to inform a future piece of work around this topic and that the overview report should be returned to this committee in the new municipal year for further consideration by the new Committee previously.

Ongoing Developments

7. In October 2019 a meeting was held with Head of Housing and the interim Head of Communities and Equalities to update the scrutiny officer of any developments since the tenant involvement overview report was presented to this Committee.

City of York Council current situation

- City of York Council currently offer the following opportunities for tenants to influence policy and service delivery:
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- Service Inspectors
- Equality Panel
- Focus Groups
- Residents Associations
- Surveys
- Leasehold Forum
- Leasehold Scrutiny Panel

Engagement and Influence

8. In line with Housing Engagement Strategy with its focus on promoting active citizens, the Housing team are now currently reviewing their current approach to involvement. The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard states:

“Registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation’s housing management service”

9. This along with a declining number of core tenants and an increase in the opportunities for tenants to influence services delivery e.g. smart tech; new IT software, has prompted a thorough review of the opportunities currently available for tenants to influence.
10. 18 different Housing Providers which include several providers in York have been reviewing different ways to engage residents including the following:
 - Tenant Scrutiny Panel to enable residents to consider and challenge housing services.
 - Focus groups, one off groups to look at specific areas.

- News Editorial Panel, looking at newsletters, leaflets, magazines etc
- Residents Associations
- Community Champions, these are individual tenants who are consulted in areas where there is no RA
- Residents Forum, similar to the Residents Federation
- Diversity Panel/Group
- Service Inspectors, these can be continuing panels who undertake monitoring as well as inspection or task and finish groups
- Repairs Panel scrutinise and monitor the repairs service
- IT Focus Group
- Mystery Shopping.
- Real Mystery Shopping this is undertaken by random tenants who are accessing services with a real purpose as opposed to mystery shoppers who create a scenario.
- Housing Opinion Panel/Customer Voice Panel/epanel, an email list of tenants who are contacted for a quick answer or to take part in a task and finish group/focus group etc
- Residents Surgeries, attended by Officers from different areas e.g. housing Management, Repairs, planned Maintenance. These Housing providers are usually the ones with their head office in a different location to their properties.
- Events, usually undertaken by Housing Associations not Local Authorities
- Surveys

11. These, broadly, reflect the activities across the 18 registered providers that have been scoped.

12. Some participants are members of several panels and most panels have declining numbers.

13. In understanding a review of the ways in which tenants/leaseholders engage with providers the individual panels will be asked for their thoughts/feedback/ comments on the following ideas as a starting point:

- Join the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and the Service Inspectors. This group could look at policy and service delivery. They could monitor improvements to delivery.
- The Leasehold Forum would continue; the Leasehold Scrutiny Panel may become a task and finish group

- Focus Groups would continue as and when necessary
- Surveys would continue as and when necessary
- The Equality Panel would decide on their own way forward
- Hold 'pop up' events around the City
- Create an email list of tenants who could be involved in 'task and finish' groups, focus groups, email surveys, one off email consultations etc.
- Create a mailing list for those who don't use email. Post would not be able to be used for some consultation activities as the timeframe would be too short.
- Use real mystery shopping – using the email list created through the 'pop up' events or find a way to gather real repair information to contact tenants
- Investigate the possibility of Community Champions as a consultation mechanism where there isn't a Residents Association
- Continue to support Residents Associations as requested and support the formation of new Residents Associations when requested.
- To gain satisfaction levels across the service to various groups it would be helpful to gather satisfaction levels from tenants at the time of service delivery e.g. repairs, tenants choice, it is suggested that maybe real mystery shopping could feed into this.

Ward refresh

14. With respect to non-housing community involvement, Members will recall that this Committee received at the July meeting a report on how the council intends to refresh Ward Committees which aims among other things to:
 - Empower local communities by devolving more budgets to wards
 - Introduce a Safer Communities Fund to meet residents' expressed priorities

Consultation

15. The Head of Housing and Head of Communities and Equalities provided information regarding ongoing developments in the context of the CYC Engagement Strategy and the agenda to refresh Ward Committees.

Analysis

16. According to officers:

- 95% of adults aged 16 to 74 years in the UK in 2018 were recent internet users, email being used by 86% of adults (Office for National Statistics)
- Housing Facebook page:
 - 216 Followers and 203 likes (all uk)
 - Over a 28 day period 2,222 a total reach of 2,222 was achieved
 - 375 people have engaged with a post, either a like or a share
 - 81% of our fans are women in the age bracket of
 - 15% 25-34
 - 28% 35-44
 - 23% 45-54
 - Only 19% are men
 - Biggest bracket is 35-44

17. Members are advised officers are now reviewing the current approach to engagement and involvement in housing and community issues.

- I. Agree with the recommendation of the former Committee that there is potentially further work for the Committee to undertake in this area either by more detailed review or:
- II. By receiving further update from officers on the work they are undertaking or not

Council Plan

18. The Council is currently reviewing and consulting upon its new Council Plan for 2019-23. It is scheduled to be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 24 October. The Plan will, no doubt, contain suitable priorities for Housing and community involvement.

Implications

19. There are no Financial, Human Resources (HR) Equalities), Legal, Crime and Disorder Information Technology (IT), Property or other.

20. However if the Members decided to undertake further investigation into engagement as per the original topic request, it may involve communicating and or making joint arrangements with the Housing and

Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee, as housing issues fall under that committee's remit.

Risk Management

21. There are no risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

22. That Members are asked to consider if any further work is required by the Committee in this area or not;

And or whether they wish to receive further updates on the officer reviews currently being undertaken or not.

Reason: To comply with scrutiny policy and procedures.

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/17557/housing_engagement_strategy

Annexes

Annex 1 – Tenant Involvement Overview

Abbreviations

CYC- City of York Council
UK- Unites Kingdom