

**ANNEX A**

***HOUSING SERVICES***

***CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT COMPACT***

***3<sup>RD</sup> edition 2007-2010***

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## **Foreword from the Executive Member for Housing**

These are exciting times to be a tenant of City of York Council housing. Tenants have increasing power to become involved in the planning and running of Housing services. Involvement means that tenant and their representatives are to be encouraged and supported by the Council to influence and shape the running of the housing service. It also means that they share responsibility for improvements with Councillors and Council officers

York is at the forefront of Tenant Involvement and has been for some years. Principles agreed in the TENANTS' COMPACT 2003-2006 have helped us deliver outstanding results like the continuing success of local agreements (such as Bell Farm and Foxwood) as well as an independent and strong Federation of Residents' and Community Associations with a revised updated constitution and an agreed plan of future action (called "business plan"). Recently a 'stock take' has taken place which has enabled Residents Groups to identify their strengths and weaknesses and has used a new format of 'cluster meetings' with groups of Residents associations meeting together to share good practice and ideas. groups of Residents associations meeting together to share good practice and ideas. Residents have also been involved in an environmental workshop to look at how their own actions and their influence can contribute towards protecting and improving their environment.

As Executive Member for Housing, I aim to continue the excellent work done under the previous TENANTS' COMPACT 'Getting on Board' 2003-2006 and welcome (and encourage) all tenants to become involved in monitoring and reviewing the housing service to help it improve. This agreement is about action to make this happens. Therefore, I am pleased to endorse it.

Executive Member for Housing

**This document can help housing tenants and other customers see how they can be involved (as much or as little as they wish) in developing the housing service, and in being part of effective community groups.**

**The Compact was prepared by Federation members on the Tenant Compact Working Group alongside officers from Housing Services and the Neighbourhood Management team.**

**It is an important part of making sure that the council and tenants work together to deliver improvements in housing services. We look forward to working with the council to develop action plans and initiatives to ensure tenants and other customers of the housing service are at the heart of improving services.**

Pat Holmes  
Chair of York Federation of Residents and Community Associations

## What is the Customer Involvement Compact?

This agreement is between City of York council Housing Service (the landlord) and York "Tenants". "Tenants" means:

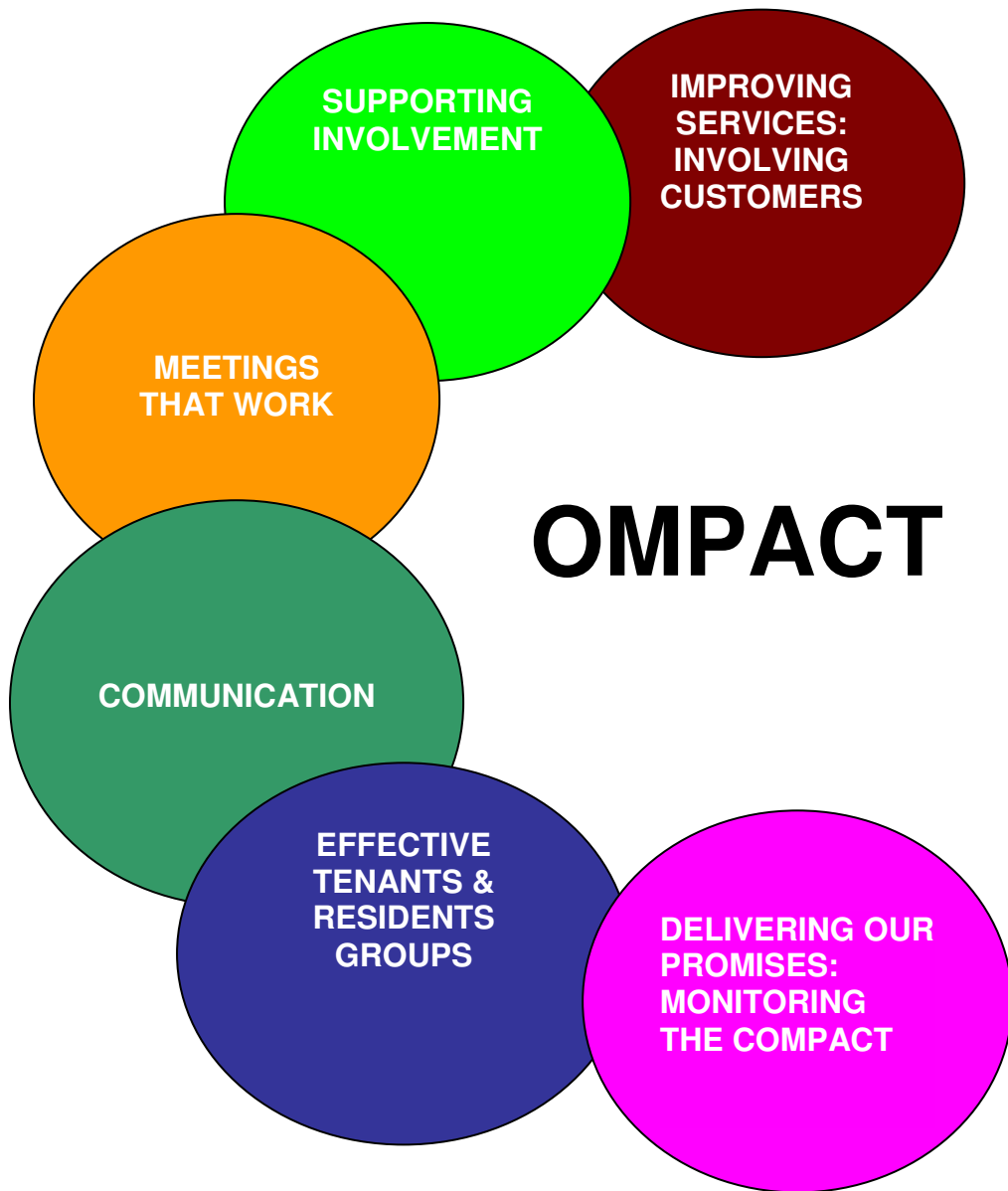
- secure tenants,
- council leaseholders,
- tenants with introductory tenancies,
- sheltered or supported housing tenants
- people living temporary housing owned by City of York Council
- any groups who represent tenants.
- Residents Associations umbrella groups such as the York Federation for .....

The agreement sets out the principles based on how we will involve housing customers in

- decisions made by CYC Housing Services affecting their homes and communities
- being able to influence service improvements
- monitoring the housing service
- community and neighbourhood issues

The benefits of the Compact are

- Sets out clearly the responsibilities, of the council, customer and residents associations in relation to tenant involvement
- Helps raise awareness of how customers can be involved in the housing service
- Sets standards for participation and involvement, which will be regularly monitored



To accompany this agreement we are developing an **Action Plan setting out how we will ensure that the standards set out in the document are met**

**Detailed procedures for officers and residents groups will also be produced and updated to ensure we have clear guidance for staff and residents associations on how to deliver each of the themes this Compact**

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> City of York Council Compact – the Agreement runs until April 2010.

In the meantime the agreement will be regularly monitored and the action plans updated to reflect progress.

## **FACTS**

### **Council housing in the City of York**

- At 1 April 2007 council owned housing stock totalled 8054 dwellings.
- Just less than half the housing stock comprises of houses, the remaining 51% being flats, maisonettes and bungalows.
- The council has 14 sheltered schemes, 4 of these being sheltered with extra care.
- Most council housing is in very high demand, however, there are a few streets and types of accommodation which are less popular.

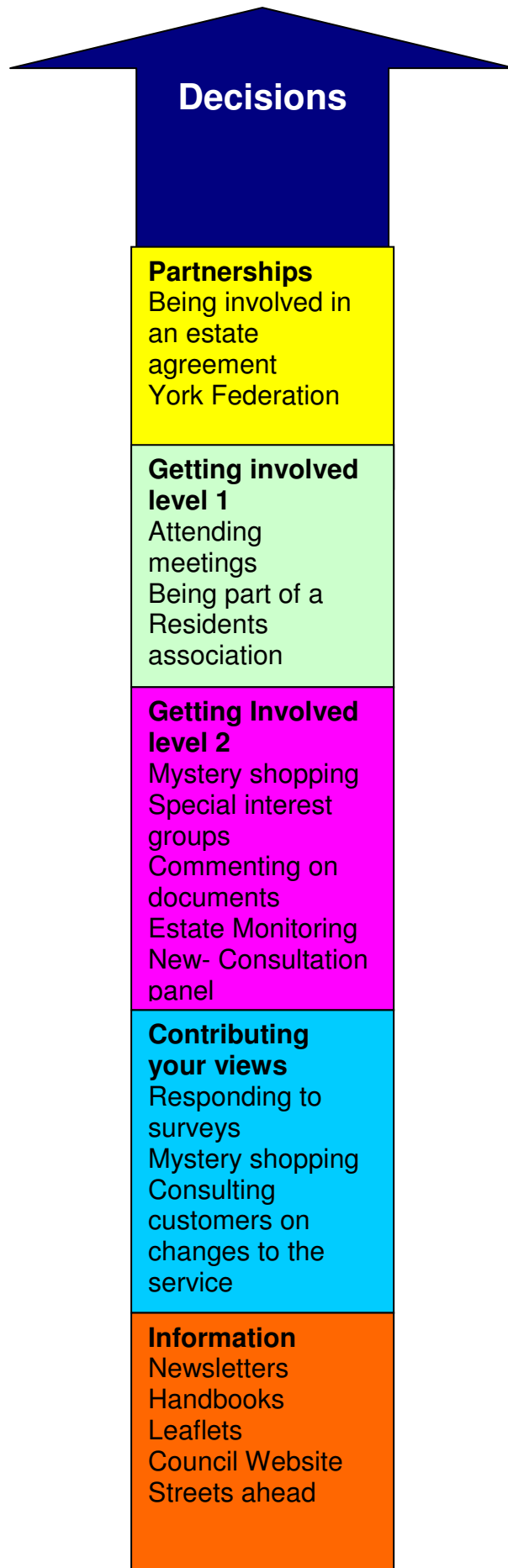
### **Tenant and resident involvement in York so far**

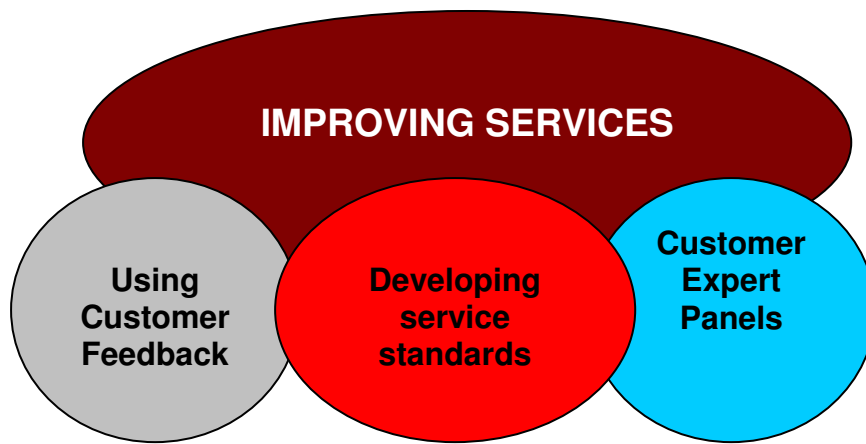
- York has a strong tradition of tenant and resident involvement, with its Federation of Residents' and Community Associations comprising of nineteen groups, covering 76% of council tenancies.
- Two tenant representatives sit on the Executive Member for Housing and Advisory Panel in a non-voting capacity. This agreement will make tenant involvement stronger .

### **Achievements Since the last tenant compact include:**

- A thorough Audit of the skills and capacity of residents associations known as 'The Big Stock Take'
- Environmental workshops
- Revision of the federation constitution
- Follow up interviews with residents following the 2005 Annual Housing Survey, and focus groups following the 2006 survey

This compact sets out how customers can be involved – from decision making down to the information you can expect to receive.  
In between there are lots of ways you can be involved....



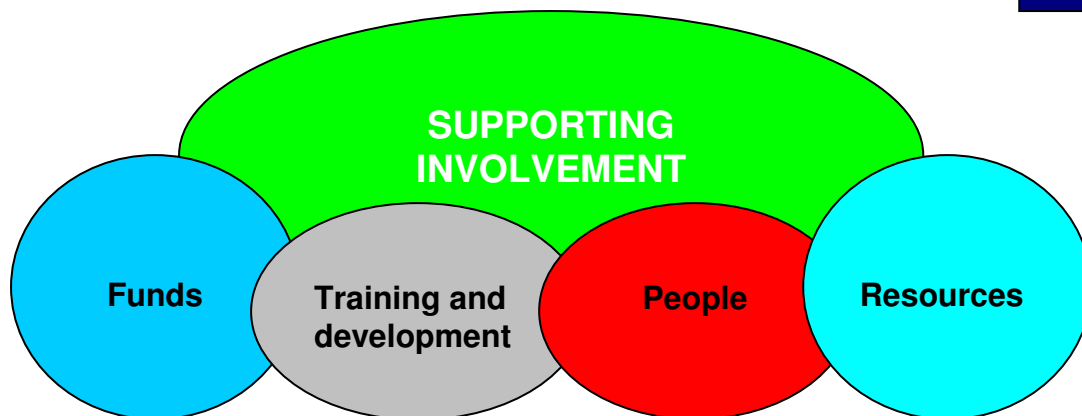


- Policies and procedures - We will consult with customers on changes to policies and procedures which directly affect customers via the Federation, Streets Ahead and 'Armchair Feedback' as appropriate
- We will continue to meet regularly with residents to monitor the Foxwood and Bell Farm estate agreements
- We will consult with customer on major policies and strategies including the business plan and housing strategy when these are reviewed .
- Consult tenants about key changes to budgets affecting housing service provision

#### **From 2007**

- CYC Housing will offer tenants the opportunity to be part of an 'armchair' feedback panel, commenting on documents or offering feedback on services via phone, email or post
- During 2007 we will develop 'Customer Expert Panels' who will specialise in a particular service area, and work on monitoring performance, helping us develop policy. This might include mystery shopping, or being a customer inspector, by checking out a particular area of our service
- Develop involvement methods for our customers living in temporary accommodation
- Review the leaseholder handbook and our approach to involving leaseholders in the housing service





**This section sets out the resources (both money and people – available to help customers be involved and the responsibilities of the council, tenants, and residents associations**

**Overall Tenant Participation Budget**

The Tenant Participation budget is held by the Neighbourhood Management Unit who deliver support for resident involvement through a ‘partnership agreement’ with Housing Services. The budget supports all kinds participation and consultation work including specific funding for Residents Groups – set out below

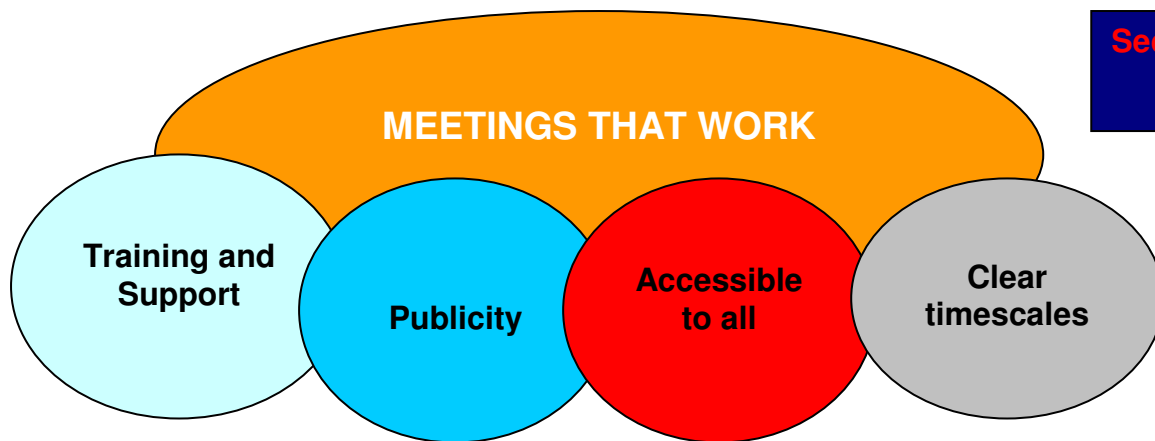
**Financial assistance to Residents Associations (RA )**

<b>The Council Will</b>	<b>Residents Associations Will</b>
Make money available for Resident Associations’ to meet, communicate, attend relevant meetings and learn skills that will help them operate successfully – These are called RA Support Budgets	Add to the RA support budget by fundraising activities or making grant applications
Make budgets available to fund Estate Improvements . These will be called Estate Improvement Grants (EIG)	Work with the council & local tenants to decide the priorities for spending EIG in their areas
Pay for insurance to help tenant associations, subject to budget limitations	

**Non Financial Assistance - facilities, equipment and officer support & Advice for Residents Associations**

<b>The Council Will</b>	<b>Residents Associations Will</b>
Make meeting venues available for the Federation and the group which will monitor this Agreement	Use facilities equipment and other support provided responsibly and with due consideration to equality of opportunity
Ensure that officers attend meetings which help tenants exercise their right to become involved	Use the support to become independent self-managing groups Let officers know in advance of any particular topics they will be questioned on at RA meetings
Offer Secretariat support for the Federation and its associated groups until such time as tenants do not require it	Actively encourage tenants in their areas become involved by being open inclusive and proactive

Within budget and staff time limitations, offer access to IT training and equipment for RA Committees	Recognise that CYC officer time is limited and needs to be spread equitable amongst all tenant groups
Make time-limited officer support available to help RAs develop and improve. The amount and nature of support needed will be agreed individually with each RA at the beginning of each financial year. The essence of this support will be to help RAs become independent self-managing organisations with active involved members	Work towards and maintain independence and self-management
Whenever possible provide in-house training for RAs or provide information about external training providers for RAs to use	Offer peer support



It is important that any meeting held between the council and tenants allows for everyone to be able to participate in the decision-making process.

### **Before Meetings:**

#### **The Council will ensure that: -**

- All meetings have a clear purpose.
- The purpose is communicated clearly to tenants and their representative
- Tenants and their representatives are clear of what is required of them during the meeting and where appropriate have the opportunity to influence the agenda
- All meetings are publicised well in advance and in areas and media which are easily accessed by tenants
- Papers for meetings are available in good time with executive summaries in plain English to help non-professionals understand the topic
- The possibility of inviting co-optees or tenant expert-witnesses is examined where appropriate
- Tenants are actively supported to attend, for example by making available transport costs, child and relative caring costs, etc
- It has considered whether tenants attending need payment in lieu of their time and expertise. Payments (if any) will be made in accordance with rules agreed by the Federation

### **During Meetings:**

#### **The Council will ensure that :**

- The agenda is followed
- The meeting runs within agreed times
- The rules guiding the meeting are understood by all
- Tenants understand the proceedings and topics for discussion and feel comfortable and able to participate as required
- Decisions taken are arrived at and recorded clearly explaining the reasons for the decision when appropriate
- Everyone attending has the opportunity to participate equitably

**Customers of the Housing Service who attend meetings will ensure that:**

- They arrive on time, having at their disposal all relevant information and material they need to participate actively and fully
- Act within the rules of the meeting
- Follow the agenda and do not bring unrelated matters up for discussion
- They have consulted with those whom they represent in advance and are able to bring a representative point of view to the meeting

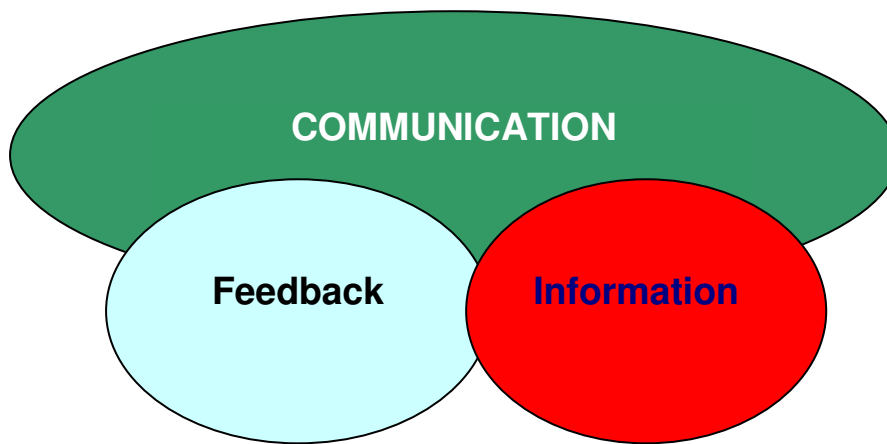
**After the meeting:-**

**The Council will:**

- Communicate the outcome and its implications clearly to those affected
- Issue notes and/or minutes within 20 days of the meeting
- Explain the implications of any decisions clearly and where appropriate offer the opportunity for decisions to be re-examined

**Customers will:-**

- Ensure that information gained at the meeting including decisions reached is communicated to those affected

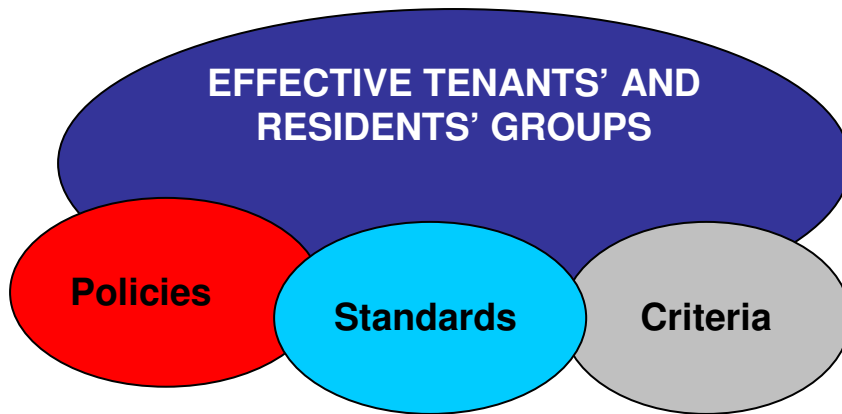


### The Council will

- Use a variety of ways to communicate with tenants
- Make sure all documents sent to tenants and provided at meetings and consultation events involving tenants are:
  - Accessible i.e.
  - in plain and clear language
  - available in large print, Braille, audio tape, and languages other than English on request
  - Good quality and timely
  - All papers published and distributed 10 working days before meeting date
- Make sure that That information is readily available in the following areas:
  - The compact itself
  - A summary of the tenant participation compact
  - How to get involved, the benefits of being involved and support available
  - Information and advice about tenant participation and involvement opportunities, including the estate improvement grant programme.
  - Housing strategies, policies, plans and programmes
  - Accessible summary documents of existing and new strategies, policies, plans and programmes.
- All tenants receive regular information and communication
  - via Streets Ahead, the magazine for CYC tenants and leaseholders published four times per year
  - Our web pages, which we will keep up to date and include information on how tenants can be involved

### Tenants will

- Use appropriate information and communication channels
- Use communication to share their experience of services done well as well as those which need improvement
- Share information they have gained elsewhere with other tenants and CYC officers, especially in areas that need improvement



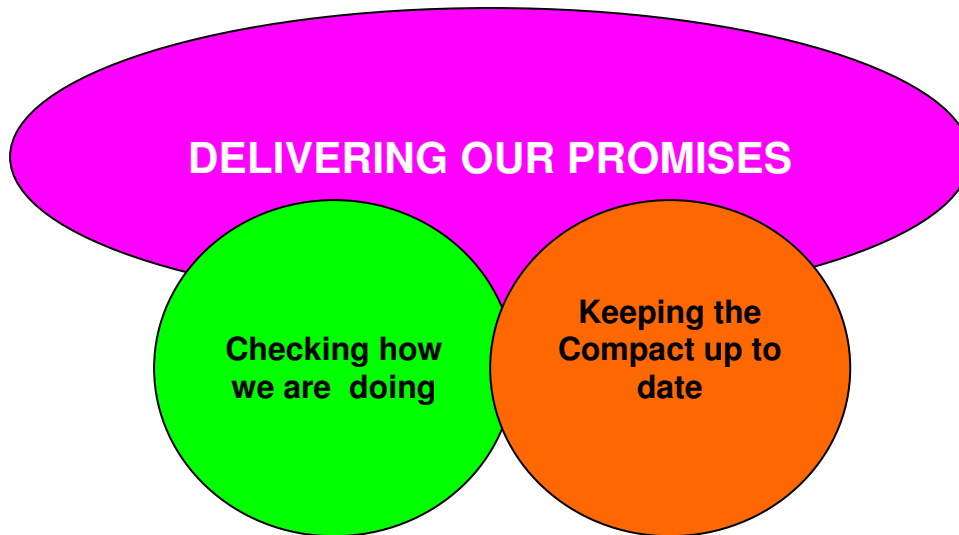
Tenants' and residents' groups and associations (RA) operating under this agreement need to meet the council's criteria for formal recognition.

**For groups to have a formal role in decision-making they must show that they are democratic, accountable and have:**

- A written constitution
- Membership open to all tenants and leaseholders in locality
- Equal opportunities policies, which are followed
- Regular elections
- Financial records
- Regular meetings, including an annual general meeting
- Agreed level of active membership
- Procedures on making information on the RA available including promoting membership and events
- Regular newsletters (or similar) with members
- Evidence that they meet their aims and objectives
- The skills to work effectively as a residents group – undertaking training and development where improved skills are needed

CYC will help tenants meet these standards by providing resources (see section 2) – Supporting Involvement including training, development and capacity building work with groups.

***As well Tenants and residents groups see Section 1 for other ways you can participate in the housing service***



Action plans to make sure that the Council continues to deliver and develop this Agreement will be drawn up by CYC and Tenants each year in May for the next year.

These will be drafted and monitored by the Customer Involvement Compact Panel (CICP) and agreed with the York Federation. The CICP will make sure that the council can demonstrate where customers have been involved in improvements to the service, The CICP will be accountable to the Federation and will be chaired by tenant or leaseholder. CYC will provide secretariat support to the CICP until such time as the Group states it does not need it.

#### **How is the CICP made up: -**

Two thirds of the group will comprise tenant-representatives elected through the Federation at the beginning of the lifetime of this Agreement. The Chair of the Group will be elected from amongst these tenants.

One third of the Group will comprise “expert witnesses” and co-optees selected by the Federation Chair, CICP Chair, the Executive Member for Housing and the Assistant Director for Housing.

#### **Expert witnesses and co-optees can include:**

- Councillors
- Council officers
- Tenants
- Tenants and residents from areas outside York
- Individuals from community and voluntary groups
- Tenants who represent hard to reach groups

#### **Monitoring Arrangements**

- The group will meet at least quarterly to monitor progress. Where we have new projects to work on extra meetings and the establishment of sub-groups may be necessary.

- The CICP Chair will update progress with this Agreement every quarter at Federation meetings, including the AGM where an annual report on progress will be submitted.
- The yearly Action Plan will encompass standards targets and deliverables.
- The Agreement will be comprehensively reviewed every three years by the AMG and council officers. The next review will begin in January 2010



### **INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED ???**

**For more information on how you can be involved in any of the ways set out in this compact contact the Neighbourhood Management Team at 2 Blake Street York (Tel. 01904 551289) or use the reply slip**

**Also look out in Streets Ahead and your local Residents Association newsletters for other ways you can be involved.**

**Remember – involvement is not just about meetings –we are interested in hearing from you if you can help in other ways – for example making checks on your estate, mystery shopping, or ‘armchair involvement’ commenting on documents sent to you by post or email or responding to consultation or feedback surveys**

**BUSINESS REPLY TEAR OFF SLIP**

**To go here**