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## Meeting of Executive Member for Neighbourhoods & Housing Services

15<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Report of the Assistant Director – Housing & Public Protection

### The Introduction of Tenant Inspectors

#### Summary

1. This report advises of the progress made in recruiting tenant inspectors and asks the Executive Member to endorse the proposed structure for reporting inspectors recommendations.

#### Background

2. In January 2010 Housing Services under went a mock inspection, part of this inspection covered the area of resident involvement. The inspection highlighted the need to complete and implement the Customer Engagement Strategy and within this a need to put in place a system of proactively involving tenants in the monitoring of the service and recommending changes. As a result of this Housing Services Management Team made a decision to introduce Tenant Inspectors.
3. Within the recently published consultation paper 'Local Decisions : a fairer future for social housing' the government indicates the intention to abolish the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) as the housing regulatory body and give that responsibility the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The government have also stated that they see a much bigger role for tenants in the regulation of landlords and that the creation of tenant inspection regimes should form a key component in an authorities' self regulating process.
4. A framework for how tenants can inspect aspects of the service and hold the service to account has been developed and a number of Tenant Inspectors recruited. The new Tenant Inspectors have undergone training to ensure that they are clear about their role and have the tools to successfully conduct an inspection. A group of front line staff have also volunteered to be involved in the inspection regime and have been actively promoting the scheme with colleagues in the department.

#### Consultation

5. As part of the consultation with the Federation of Tenant and Resident Associations on the development of the Customer Engagement Strategy there

has been discussion about the use of Tenant Inspectors which was well received.

6. Recruitment of the Tenant Inspectors has been through the open day the department held in November 2010, adverts in "Streets Ahead" and inviting applications from tenants who had made a complaint in the last 6 months.

## **Options**

7. Option one – Acknowledge the introduction of a Tenant Inspection process and endorse the approach to decision making.
8. Option two – Acknowledge the introduction of a Tenant Inspections process and suggest an alternative approach to decision making.

## **Analysis**

9. The aim is to train those tenants who have been successfully selected to act as inspectors, their training will be provided by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and includes :
  - Background & context
  - Benefits of a range of inspection techniques
  - Planning a desk top review
  - Undertaking an observation exercise and mini-mystery shop
  - Practice interviewing & listening skills
  - Developing terms of reference, code of conduct & practicalities
  - Examples of tenant inspector projects & successes
  - Recording & presenting feedback report
10. The staff who have volunteered to be champions of the inspection service have also received training from TPAS and will have some involvement in assisting the inspectors with the process.
11. The inspectors will start by taking discrete areas of the service and test the service against the authority's standards and tenants' expectation. Following the inspection the tenants will write up their findings and present the report to a panel made up from the tenant inspectors and the staff volunteers (the tenants will always be in the majority). Their recommendations will then be presented to Housing Services Management Team (HSMT) for approval and where any suggestion requires a policy change, this will be subject to a report to the Executive Member. The outcomes will be published in the tenants' newsletter "Streets Ahead" to encourage greater involvement.

## **Corporate Priorities**

12. The Tenant Inspectors support the Corporate strategy under the 'Inclusive City' theme.

13. The use of inspectors also supports the objectives set out within the Housing Services' Customer Engagement Strategy and also with wider government thinking on self regulation.

## **Implications**

14. The implications arising from this report are:
- **Financial** - There will be some minor expenses and training costs that can be contained within existing budgets.
  - **Human Resources (HR)** - None
  - **Equalities** - As a new engagement method, this will increase the diversity of our involved customers.
  - **Legal** - None
  - **Crime and Disorder** - None
  - **Information Technology (IT)** - None
  - **Property** - None
  - **Other** - None

## **Risk Management**

15. There are no foreseeable risks associated with the introduction of the Tenant Inspection process and as such score lower than 16.

## **Recommendations**

16. The executive member is asked to:
- Approve option 1 and specifically endorse the proposed structure for reporting recommendations that are set out in paragraph 11.

Reason: By introducing the service it will encourage customer involvement in shaping the housing service and will provide the service with greater transparency

## **Contact Details**

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	<b>Report Approved</b>	✓	<b>Date</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> January 2011		
<b>Wards Affected:</b> <i>List wards or tick box to indicate all</i>				<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1187 555 1254 616"><b>All</b></td> <td data-bbox="1254 555 1369 616">✓</td> </tr> </table>	<b>All</b>	✓
<b>All</b>	✓					
<b>For further information please contact the author of the report</b>						