



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

7 November 2013

Title: Customer Involvement Activity – Update
– April to September 2013

Report of: Managing Director

Purpose of Report

1. To provide committee with a summary of involvement activity across the company for the second quarter of 2013/14.

Background

2. All housing company customers are encouraged to get involved in ways that suit them, based on the time they have available and the level of commitment they wish to make. Customer involvement is central to the way we deliver our services.
3. The Involvement and Empowerment standard of the HCA's Regulatory Framework places a requirement on landlords to ensure that tenants are given a range of opportunities to influence and shape policies and scrutinise our services.
4. The Delivery Plan 2013-15 includes an objective to support and fully embed co-regulation. This is carried out through a range of ways including the TALISMAN panel, Complaints Scrutiny Panel and through the development of an annual report for tenants and leaseholders each year, (designed, developed and written by our customers).

Summary

5. During the period, 1 July to 30 September 2013, 78 involvement activities took place. Customers were involved in various activities including: TALISMAN meetings and a TALISMAN led mystery shopping exercise, Service Improvement Groups, attendance at summer community events, BME housing forum, Disabled Persons Housing forum and Management Team Drop Ins.
6. Customers have been involved in our activities on over 3500 occasions, however some may have been involved in more than one event.

7. Appendix 1 to this report shows a summary of activities undertaken during this period and demonstrates the variety of ways customers have been involved. This information is broken down by the two broad service areas, Corporate Services and Customers and Communities, to highlight the different forms of activities that have taken place across the company.
8. Appendix 2 to this report shows where the venues activities have taken place during this period.

Key outcomes of involvement

9. There have been a number of outcomes from customer involvement during this period which are highlighted below:
 - A TALISMAN led mystery shopping exercise of the services provided by Rent and Income team to those customers whom were affected by the newly introduced Welfare Reform bill.
 - Feedback gained from attendance at Northern Pride part of the Opportunity Knocks programme will be used to formulate a proposed LGBT customer forum.
 - Customers were given the opportunity to engage with the Management Team through a series of drop in events taking place in local offices.
 - The Disabled Persons Housing Forum reviewed the ARCH hate crime reporting annual report 2012 / 2013.
 - BME housing forum reviewed the existing Single Equality Scheme and comments taken from this group will be incorporated into the revised version of the scheme.
 - Consultation took place with Involvement SIG regarding transportation costs incurred for SIG's and forums. The group reviewed costings and feedback that transportation assistance should be reviewed when the business co-locates to Gateshead civic centre as transport links are close by.
 - Tenancy and Allocation team are reviewing their automated message accessed by customers contacting Tyne and Wear Homes. Following initial feedback that the message was too long, they are reviewing the wording of message.

Performance against service standards

10. There are a number of service standards in place for involvement to help monitor performance and ensure that we continue to involve customers in the way services are delivered. They are as follows:
 - Number of involved customers (previously titled Representation of involved customers)
 - Annual training programme course attendance
 - Satisfaction with feedback following involvement
 - % of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account (annual figure reported to the last committee)
 - Number of events attended.

11. At the end of the period 1st July 2013 – 30th September 2013, performance was as follows:
- There were 876 involved customers on our database, exceeding the target of 840 for the year.
 - There have been 84 attendees on customer training courses, on course to meet to the target of 180 by the end of the year.
 - Satisfaction with feedback from involvement was 98.0%, exceeding the target set for the year of 97%
 - We have attended 26 events, exceeding the target of 16.

Summer of Fun

12. The Summer of Fun programme ran from June to August 2013 aiming to provide prizes to local community groups ranging from items from gardening equipment to kitchen utensils.
13. 31 groups have been awarded a prize. Examples of the successful groups include Chopwell Community Centre, Chowdene Children's Centre, Young Fire-fighters and Clara Vale Village Hall Association. Feedback will be received following receipt of the prizes to find out what impact these have on the groups.

Outcomes from Service Improvement Groups

14. In the last 6 months the service improvement groups (SIGs) have met regularly with service managers to enable customers to be involved in monitoring performance, identifying areas for improvement and working to develop new initiatives or policies.
15. Appendix 3 to this report provides a summary of the outcomes from these groups over the last 6 months.

Mears Community Initiatives

16. Appendix 4 to this report highlights the community activities Mears have completed in the last quarter. This is in addition to projects they have agreed to deliver through the community fund but which have not yet commenced which include the refurbishment of a shower block at Wrekenton Blue Star FC.

Future activity

17. The following activities are planned for 2013/14, although there will also be a range of additional activities likely to take place:
- Newcastle Eagles Hoops for Health programme for 2013/2014 will be rolled out. This year's programme will be focussing on Hate Crime coupled with the benefits of exercising, healthy eating and the dangers of passive smoking and alcohol.
 - Following on from the success of the recent event attended to recognise World Mental Health Day, the Involvement Team are attending and

hosting a stand at International Day of Disabled People to be held in December at the Sage in Gateshead.

- Consultation including a series of drop ins around the borough will be undertaken to engage with residents about the review of the Tenancy Agreement.
- Following to a successful application for funding to deliver our Energy Best Deal events, these will be rolled out in the near future.

Link to values

18. This report relates to the following company values:

- Being customer focused, innovative and professional
- Being a listening and learning organisation
- Embracing Equality.

Impact on tenants

19. We continue to work extensively with tenants, leaseholders and the wider community, to get views and opinions to identify priorities and inform services.
20. The information gained from these involvement activities helps inform service improvement and delivery, to make sure that the services we are providing to our customers meet their needs.

Risk Management Implications

21. Failure to engage with customers was identified as a key strategic risk for the company.
22. The Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA's) Involvement and Empowerment standard requires us to demonstrate that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing and are provided with the support they need to take part in this. The activities outlined within this report demonstrate our compliance with this standard.

Financial Implications

23. The Head of Corporate Services confirms that a budget is available to support customer involvement, and resources have been made available to support the activities outlined in this report.
24. Individual service managers have the opportunity to request funding from this budget to support involvement activities where they can demonstrate the potential outcomes for housing company tenants and leaseholders.

Equality and Diversity Implications

25. TGHC is committed to involving people from diverse communities to ensure everyone's views, needs and aspirations are considered in the decision making process.
26. Support is available to assist people with additional needs to access involvement opportunities and this is regularly promoted.
27. Every effort is made to ensure we do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any individual or group and to provide equal access to this service and the representation of involved tenants is regularly monitored and acted upon.

Value for Money implications

28. The involvement of tenants and the wider community can result in value for money savings as service managers can gain an insight into what tenants want and need. This can result in resolving the issues first time and delivering something that works for all parties.
29. All Service Improvement Groups now have Value for Money as a regular agenda item in addition to the specific Value for Money group.

Environmental implications

30. The environmental impact of involvement is considered when conducting activities across the company and addressed wherever possible, for example, customers sharing taxis where possible when attending events.

Consultation carried out

31. Updates are given on a regular basis to TGHC's Involvement Service Improvement to advise of progress of involvement across all services and the outcomes which result.

Health Implications

32. There are no direct health implications arising from this report although the successful implementation of the recommendations would have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Gateshead residents.

Recommendation

33. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the involvement activities undertaken in the quarter.

Contact: Simon Hand, Involvement and Diversity Officer Tel: (0191) 433 5381

Appendix 1: Summary of involvement activities across the company

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Drop In Sessions	21	239
Forum	4	37
Focus Group	9	33
Service Improvement Group	12	90
Mystery Shopping	2	2
Surgery	2	24
Training Course	8	54
Event	12	3048
Meeting	8	60
Total	78	3587

Summary of Involvement Activity – Corporate Services

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Forum	4	37
Focus group	3	17
Service Improvement Group	5	47
Mystery Shopping	2	2
Surgery	2	24
Training course	8	54
Event	10	2780
Meeting	8	60
Total	42	3021

Summary of outcomes – Corporate Services

- TALISMAN mystery shopping exercise contacting customers whom had been impacted upon by the Welfare Reform. Results of this were presented to Rent and Income manager via a report written by the group based on findings from the exercise.
- Annual Report working group. Involved customers developed and designed new report gaining information required by interviewing members of corporate management team.
- Continuation of the Involvement Teams attendance at a number of community led events for Opportunity Knocks 2013, including Dunston Gala Community Festival, and well Community Fire Station Open Day etc. enabling contact to be made with customers whom we would not normally come into contact with.
- Attendance at Northern Pride to gain feedback from those in attendance of their experiences of good and poor customer service. People also provided feedback about setting up an LGBT housing focus group.

Summary of Involvement Activity - Customers and Communities

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Drop In Session	21	239
Focus Group	6	16
Service Improvement Group	7	43
Event	2	268
Total	36	566

Summary of Involvement Activity – Customers and Communities

- Over the course of this quarter, a number of drop in sessions have taken place across the borough which were facilitated by TGHC's Estate Officers. These have given elderly customers the opportunity to have face to face contact which they normally would not have.
- Attendance at the opening of a new play park in Kibblesworth whereby a number of groups and organisations attended. This was to show TGHC's support for this project and to promote services.
- Multi Storey Service Improvement group members undertook a joint inspection of works undertaken in one of our blocks.
- Tenancy and Allocation Service Improvement Group re-launched

Appendix 2: Location of Activities

Venue	Amount
Keelman House	25
Lansbury Close	1
Gateshead College	3
Civic Centre	5
Greenfield Business Centre	1
Newcastle (B&Q Scotswood and Newcastle Civic Centre, Newcastle Exhibition Park	3
Bensham Grove	2
Birtley Hub	1
Swalwell Fire Station	1
Lobley Hill Primary School	1
Dunston Park	1
Kibblesworth Lounge	1
Deckham Community Centre	1
Elgin Centre	1
Kibblesworth	3
Harrison Court	2
Joyce Close	2
Angel Court	4
Kays Cottages	1
Warwick Court	2
Croftside	1
Leyburn Place	1
McErlane Square	1
Birtley Villas	2
Cheshire Ave.,	1
Springwell Community Centre	1
Pleasant Place	3
Leam Lane Community Centre	4
Mary Saunders Hall	1
Easington Ave.,	1
Barley Mow School.	1

Appendix 3: Outcomes from Service Improvement Groups

- **Outcomes achieved**
 - **Involvement** – Reviewed recommendations for a revised version of TGHC website, this were taken forward by ICT section. Reviewed 2013 Opportunity Knocks programme and assessed results and outcomes achieved on a value for money basis. Agreed programme met VFM and that this programme should continue in 2014. Reviewed TGHC's membership of TPAS and the benefits the company receives from this. Group signed off continued membership for a further 12 months. Reviewed proposals for programme of mystery shopping and where appropriate results taken to table for comment.
 - **Older Persons** – Reviewed and agreed the implementation of tenant led budgets for sheltered schemes. Group reviewed satisfaction levels of customers whom had accessed Small Task Services and agreed that services provided were of an excellent standard. Group reviewed and fed into fire safety checks in sheltered schemes policy. Reviewed updated boiler instruction manual and comments were actioned.
 - **Home** – Joint meeting held with Leasehold SIG and members of staff from Mears and customers to review contact performance and forward plan, this was following a request from customers that staff from Mears should take an active part in this meeting and forward planning. exercises. Repairs and Maintenance, key performance indicators were brought to the group for the financial year 2013 / 2014. These were reviewed and amendments from previous year's targets were agreed.
 - **Leasehold** – Reviewed annual survey satisfaction results and discussed customer priorities and how they can be built into the SIG workplan. A review took place of Leasehold Management Policy and amendments were confirmed and agreed by the group.
 - **Multi-storey** – Group reviewed proposed amendments to Tyne and Wear Homes surveys, this was deemed fit for purpose. Customers from Multi Storey SIG have volunteered to inspect areas of works that have been carried out within the blocks they live. At SIG's they have agreed which customers will assess which blocks and their findings will be presented to the group for reference. Group have also reviewed a draft survey to be undertaken as a mystery shopping exercise on the Caretaker and Concierge service.
 - **Tenancy and allocation** – Group has been re-launched. Initial meeting was to gain feedback on Tyne and Wear Homes customer satisfaction survey and to create a work plan for the group moving forwards. Group are currently reviewing answer phone message for the service in terms of the wording used and the current length of the automated information before customers are transferred to the Tyne and Wears call queue.
 - **Value for money** – Group were presented with VFM strategy which had been drafted and amended at board level. Customers reviewed strategy and confirmed this was fit for purpose. The group have received regular updates with regards to the costs savings made due to employees have the use of an electric car for external visits / meetings. The group has reviewed cost savings and the improved impact on the environment and has recommended

continued usage of the car. Group agreed to proposals to incorporate VFM in staff induction programme.

- **Anti-social behaviour** – Group reviewed proposed training programme for ASB officers and made suggestions of how this could be themed to make it more affective. Members of the group reviewed and assessed proposals for the Customer Assessment Tool (CAT) to be used by members of staff from ASB team to ensure consistent levels of information were sought when liaising with customers reporting anti-social behaviour. Review of the service was undertaken via a mystery shopping exercise commissioned by TALISMAN. Areas of concern that were highlighted were reviewed by the SIG and an action plan drawn up. Customers reviewed and commented on action plan before sign off.