



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

11 September 2014

**Title:** TALISMAN – Progress Report

**Report of:** Managing Director

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with an update on progress against actions identified in TALISMAN reviews completed to date and provide a general update on the Panel.

### Background

2. TALISMAN (Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Management Panel) was established in October 2011. This followed an extensive project working with Wood Holmes and Gentoo to consider the opportunities for an independent tenants' organisation in Gateshead.
3. The purpose of the Panel is to ensure that the needs and views of Gateshead residents are at the heart of how housing services are developed and delivered by The Gateshead Housing Company and Gateshead Council.
4. The first review of anti-social behaviour took place between January and June 2012. The Panel's recommendations were presented to this committee in July 2012 and the action plan to address the recommendations was presented to this committee in November 2012. The committee also received a progress report in May 2013 where it was noted that the majority of actions were complete.
5. The second review of rent and income took place between March and September 2013. The Panel's recommendations were presented to this committee in September 2013 and the action plan to address the recommendations was presented to the last meeting of this committee in November 2013.
6. The third review of void management took place between October 2013 and June 2014. The Panel's recommendations are being presented to this meeting and the action plan to address the recommendations will be presented to the next meeting of the committee in November 2014.
7. The committee requested at its meeting in November 2013 that it receives a six monthly update on progress on completing actions identified from reviews. The committee received its first progress report in February 2014.

## Scrutiny Reviews - Progress completing actions

8. At its meeting in February 2014, the committee was informed that most of the actions following the review of anti-social behaviour had already been completed and update was provided of three actions that were still outstanding. The following progress has been made since the last update. Updates are highlighted in red.
- Surveys/sample sizes – A review of our current approach to surveys was provided in a previous report to committee. This included looking at best practice from other organisations around sample sizes and methods of satisfaction collection. In 2013/14, it has been noted that response rates to a number of surveys has fallen. As a result, we will be revisiting this issue in the next financial year to determine if the approach of themed and service specific surveys continues to be the most appropriate way of collecting customer satisfaction information.
  - Collect and report data to SIG for monitoring on length of time taken to resolve ASB cases – This action requires ICT development within our ASB case management system. This is an outstanding action from 2013/14 service plan which will transfer to the 2014/15 service plan. This item is also on the SIG workplan for 2014/15. As an interim measure we will be capturing data manually. **As an interim measure we have now begun to measure some of this data manually; this information will be used as baseline data this year and will be shared with the ASB SIG later this year.**
  - Share Housemark data and work with SIG to benchmark – This was discussed with SIG as part of 2013/14 workplan, and included performance, satisfaction and costs. A presentation was also provided by the business support officer; benchmarking will continue on the SIG's workplan for 14/15. **A further update on benchmarking and performance is scheduled to be discussed at the November ASB SIG.**
9. The committee also received an updated action plan following the review of rent and income. A further updated action plan is attached at the Appendix to this report and most of these actions are now complete. Those actions that were complete when last reported to committee have been removed from the action plan.

## Other Updates

10. The committee was informed in February 2014 that there were currently five members on the Panel and that a further two applicants had been shortlisted for interview. Both these applicants were successfully appointed onto the Panel in March 2014. Unfortunately, one of these new members has recently resigned from the Panel, resulting in there currently being six members on the Panel.
11. The Panel has agreed to hold a special meeting later in the year to look at its terms of reference. In particular, the Panel would like to look at the current recruitment process and terms of office. It may be necessary for any changes to be presented to the Board and Council for approval.
12. Since the last progress report, the Panel has agreed that its next area of scrutiny will focus on customer service. Given the size of this area, the Panel has received an initial presentation giving an overview of customer service, including the office network. The Panel will agree at its next meeting specific areas it

would like to focus this review around and to agree the scope for scrutinising these.

13. Since the last update, two members of the Panel have attended the two day TPAS Annual Conference in Coventry and one member of the Panel attended a three day scrutiny event at Trafford Hall, Manchester.
14. In addition, four members of the Panel have completed a TPAS e-learning module around understanding of scrutiny and feedback from this has been very positive, identifying a number of skills that they will be able to use in their forthcoming reviews.
15. Members of the Panel continue to use the dedicated secure website for TALISMAN to share and discuss information during its reviews.
16. Members of the Panel and officers attended the third Northern Housing Consortium Annual Tenant Panel Conference in October 2013. Yvonne Davies, the event organiser has invited the Panel to facilitate one of the workshops to showcase its review of voids at the fourth Annual Conference which is taking place in November 2014 at York Racecourse. This highlights just how far the Panel has come since it was established in October 2011.

#### **Link to values**

17. This report relates to the following company values: -
  - Being customer focused, innovative and professional
  - Being a listening and learning organisation
  - Being honest, accountable and transparent
  - Embracing equality

#### **Impact on tenants**

18. The overall aim of the TALISMAN is to ensure that the needs and views of Gateshead residents are at the heart at how housing services are delivered.
19. The work of the TALISMAN has already identified areas for improvement during the first two reviews which will benefit tenants and leaseholders as a whole.

#### **Risk Management Implications**

20. Failure to engage with tenants has been identified as an overall strategic risk for the company. The TALISMAN builds on the existing structures in place for tenants and leaseholders to shape services and influence our delivery.
21. Feedback and monitoring of responses to recommendations following a review by the TALISMAN is fundamental to ensuring that tenants feel they are being listened to, encouraging their ongoing engagement.
22. The TALISMAN supports the company's overall approach to co-regulation as set out in the Homes and Community Agency's regulatory framework.

### **Financial Implications**

23. There is a budget in place to support the operation of TALISMAN. Where recommendations are made which have budgetary implications they would be considered on a case by case basis.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

24. TALISMAN's code of conduct includes specific expectations relating to equality and diversity. All new members of the panel will either attend a full day training session or undertake the company's e-learning course to give them a level of understanding.
25. In addition, the framework for each review includes consideration as to whether the service is inclusive.

### **Value for Money Implications**

26. The TALISMAN's framework for reviews includes a remit to consider value for money within the services they inspect.

### **Health Implications**

27. The reviews undertaken by the TALISMAN will ultimately result in positive health implications for tenants and leaseholders accessing the service. The TALISMAN have recognised that where it is difficult to use a service, or the information provided is unclear, this can lead to undue stress and concern for a customer.

### **Environmental Implications**

28. There are no direct environmental implications associated with this report.

### **Consultation carried out**

29. Each review will involve significant consultation with the service manager, service users, employees and possibly partners to determine how well the service is performing.
30. In addition, the TALISMAN is consulted on the proposed responses to recommendations by the service area to allow negotiations where necessary.

### **Recommendation**

31. The views of the committee are sought on the progress made since the last six monthly update in February 2014.