



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

6 May 2015

**Title:** Customer Involvement Activity - Update

**Report of:** Managing Director

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on customer involvement activity for the final quarter of 2014/15.

### Background

2. The committee has previously requested a quarterly update of involvement activity across the company. In line with the company's delivery plan we aim to support and embed co-regulation by involving customers in looking at the services we provide now, and helping us to shape them in the future via a number of methods including supporting the TALISMAN and Complaints panels and continuing to involve customers in how we deliver services.
3. The Company's Guide to Getting Involved sets out the wide range of ways customers can get involved depending on the time they have available and the areas they are particularly interested in.

### Summary

4. During the period, 1 January to 31 March 2015, 80 involvement activities took place.
5. Customers were involved in various activities including panel and customer meetings, Service Improvement Groups, drop in sessions, forums, workshops and training courses.
6. Customers have been involved in our involvement activities on over 800 occasions although some may have been involved in more than one activity.
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. The activities are broken down by service area to highlight the different work that has taken place across the company.

8. Appendix 2 to this report shows the venues of where activities have taken place during this period.
9. Appendix 3 to this report shows a breakdown of activity by neighbourhood area.

### **Key outcomes of involvement**

10. There have been a number of outcomes from customer involvement during this period which are highlighted below; -
  - Digital drop ins held to develop basic computer skills of tenants and leaseholders to enable them to access services online
  - A representative of the Community Safety team at Gateshead Council attended both the Disabled and BME housing forums to raise awareness of their service and advise what they cover and how customers can report incidents around issues such as domestic violence and hate crime
  - Leaseholders reviewed the 'Right to Buy' offer notice and made suggestions for improvements
  - Delivered a session around independent living to young people taking part in the Princes Trust 'Team' programme which covered budgeting, the impacts and consequences of anti-social behaviour and your rights and responsibilities as a tenant
  - Worked in partnership with Newcastle Eagles basketball team and delivered workshops to Gateshead primary schools which included a session on stereotyping in the community, provoking discussions around hate crime and the impact this can have, feeding into the wider community cohesion strategy for Gateshead
  - In partnership with the Greggs Foundation, we have supported a breakfast club at Brandling Primary school. This has given a number of children who are living in our homes access to a nutritious breakfast before they start the school day
  - Open day held at Warwick Court to promote courses delivered through Adult learning and our Moving Forward courses. Digital skills and craft sessions were held on the day, with some people enrolling on other courses. Customers also registered for our informal digital drop ins
  - Multi-storey inspections were carried out by members of the Multi-storey Service Improvement Group to check that the service standards are being achieved
  - Here and Now winter roadshows took place giving sheltered scheme residents the opportunity to raise issues they are experiencing in their home face-to-face with their scheme officer, and provide feedback on particular work that is presented to residents
  - Members of the Complaints Panel shadowed officers at Mears to see how jobs are received and allocated, and to understand more about the repairs process. They were surprised at how many 'no access' appointments happened and this will help to inform their scrutiny of repairs complaints.

## Warwick Court Communal Lounge

11. An open day was held at Warwick Court to launch the refurbished communal lounge and encourage greater use of the room by residents from the block and in the locality.
12. At the open day there were a range of activities residents could take part in, such as arts and crafts sessions and digital skills training. These were to act as a taster for Adult learning courses that are being held in Warwick Court from 20 April for a ten week period.
13. We also engaged with residents, encouraging them to sign up to our 'Let's get digital, digital' drop-ins for those who preferred a more informal learning environment or didn't have the time to commit to a ten week programme.
14. As part of the launch of the communal lounge, a weekly lunch club has been set up for local residents. This agreement has been established between the housing company and Destiny Church North East, whereby they can offer a two-course meal at a low cost. This also gives residents the opportunity to meet new people and engage with their neighbours. Officers also attend to act as a point of contact for particular queries customers may have around their housing.

## Service Improvement Groups (SIGs)

15. Service Improvement Groups continue to meet on a regular basis to help drive improvements around service delivery across the company.
16. There are currently eight SIGs, covering the following areas of the business;
  - **Involvement** (covering involvement, diversity and customer service)
  - **Older Persons**
  - **Home** (covering repairs and improvements)
  - **Leasehold** (covering issues faced by leaseholders)
  - **Multi-storey** (covering issues faced by multi storey customers)
  - **Tenancy and allocation** (including allocations, tenancy strategies and rent and income services)
  - **Value For Money**
  - **Anti-social behaviour.**
17. All groups receive performance information relating to the service's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or service standards at least every 6 months.
18. Where a TALISMAN review is conducted on a particular service area, the action plan developed as a result will be monitored by the relevant SIG.
19. Since the previous SIG update, the group have influenced services and achieved a range of outcomes including:
  - Developed the Moving Forward customer training programme for 2015/16

- Influenced the Value for Money (VFM) strategy and discussed how VFM is achieved in the Lettings service
- Leaseholders reviewed Gateshead Council's 'Right to Buy' offer notice and made suggestions for improvements as well as amending the internal painting booklet
- Multi storey members gave feedback on the proposed format of High Rise news
- Anti-social behaviour SIG saw the introduction of an average duration for an ASB case to be open following recommendation by TALISMAN. Members were also consulted on the hoarding procedure and given the opportunity to influence this
- Home SIG discussed and agreed new targets for the coming year as well as Home**Repairs** and Investment end of year performance
- Older persons' SIG agreed name change from roadshows to drop-ins, to make it less formal and encourage greater attendance from residents and agreed work plan for the year ahead.

20. Appendix 4 provides more information on outcomes by each SIG group.

### **Performance against service standards**

21. 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: -

- Representation of involved customers (customers on our involvement database)
- Annual training programme course attendance
- Satisfaction with feedback following involvement
- % of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account
- Number of events attended.

22. At the end of the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 performance was as follows: -

- There were 952 involved customers on our database, exceeding the target of 890
- There were 156 attendees on customer training courses which is under our target of 180. Despite more courses being held this year, many of these have been focussed 1-2-1 digital inclusion sessions, thus attendance figures not being representative of number of courses having taken place
- Satisfaction with feedback following involvement is high at 96.40%, marginally under target of 97%
- 73.90% of tenants are satisfied that their views are taken into account which exceeds our target of 72.50%
- We have attended 34 events during this period, which is a slight decrease from last year's figure of 37.

## **External Recognition**

23. In the last quarter the company has been recognised and shortlisted for two awards for projects where tenants and leaseholders have been actively involved. In the Northern round of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) awards for 2015 we were shortlisted in the following areas: -
- 'Excellence in Co-regulation' – for our approach to co-regulation and how we meet the regulatory requirements
  - 'Excellence in tenant led scrutiny' – for the scrutiny work that TALISMAN have undertaken across the company to help improve service delivery.
24. The winners will be announced on 24 April 2015.

## **Future activity**

25. The following activities are planned for 2015/16, although there will also be a range of additional community events likely to take place that we are awaiting confirmation for: -
- The company will be attending a funding event in April, organised by Gateshead Council, to promote the various funding opportunities available to community groups, so we will use this opportunity to promote our Community Fund
  - We will be holding another joint forum following the request of members, which will have a focus on Community Safety
  - As part of our Opportunity knocks programme we will be attending a range of community festivals during the summer to promote involvement activities available and the range of services we provide
  - We will continue to work in partnership with Newcastle Eagles basketball team working with young children and raise awareness of the importance of respecting people in the community and not stereotyping others
  - We will be working in partnership with Gem Arts to deliver a project with senior school children focussing on hate crime and the impact this can have on individuals and the community as a whole
  - An annual report will be developed with tenants and leaseholders for 2014/15.
  - We will be identifying two additional schools for breakfast clubs.

## **Link to Values**

26. This report relates to the Company values of: -
- Customer focused
  - Open and honest
  - Accountable
  - Inclusive, valuing diversity
  - Innovative

### **Impact on tenants**

27. We have worked extensively with tenants, leaseholders and the wider community during this period, to get views and opinions to identify priorities and inform services.
28. 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**

29. Failure to engage with customers was identified as a key strategic risk for the company.
30. 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**

31. 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.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

32. The company is committed to involving people from diverse communities to ensure everyone's views, needs and aspirations are considered in the decision making process.
33. Support is available to assist people with additional needs to access involvement opportunities and this is regularly promoted.
34. 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**

35. 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.
36. Value for money is considered within service improvement groups when making decisions, for example most recently in relation to TPAS membership with customers assessing whether this is an effective use of resources.

### **Environmental Implications**

37. 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**

38. The Involvement Service Improvement Group is regularly updated with the progress of involvement across all services and the outcomes which result.
39. Members of the Involvement SIG were presented with an overview of involvement activity for the final quarter and were satisfied with the information provided.

### **Health Implications**

40. 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**

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

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## Appendix 1: Summary of involvement activity

<b>Title of Activity</b>	<b>Number of Events</b>	<b>Number of Customers Involved</b>
Service Improvement Group	12	77
Drop in	20	109
Surveys	4	68
Surgery	2	56
Meeting	16	135
Event	3	222
Workshop	2	70
Training	4	21
Forum	3	20
Other	14	31
Total	80	809

## Summary of involvement activity – Corporate Services

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Surveys	3	18
Service Improvement Group	7	52
Meeting	12	111
Surgery	2	56
Event	2	202
Workshop	2	70
Training	3	18
Drop in	9	41
Forum	3	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>588</b>

## Summary of outcomes – Corporate services

- A number of digital drop-ins have been held to increase the computer skills of customers and help them access services online
- Awareness raising sessions held at both BME and Disabled Persons' housing forums by the Community Safety team at Gateshead Council, advising what areas their service covers such as domestic violence and hate crime reporting
- Session held about independent living to young people on the 'Team' programme of the Prince's Trust to raise awareness about being a tenant with us, looking at areas such as budgeting, ASB and your tenancy agreement, with the overall aim of sustaining tenancies among young tenants
- Attended a sheltered scheme drop in to raise awareness of involvement activities available and encourage new members to customer groups
- Delivered workshops in primary schools in partnership with Newcastle Eagles basketball team educating young children about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and not stereotyping people in the community, with an aim to improve community cohesion
- Attended community surgeries to act as a point of contact for people who have housing related queries
- Members from the Complaints Panel shadowed officers at Mears to see how it operates in their offices following a shadowing exercise at the housing company.

## Summary of involvement activity – Customers and Communities

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Surveys	1	50
Event	1	20
Service Improvement Group	5	25
Meeting	4	24
Drop in	11	68
Training	1	3
Other	14	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>221</b>

## Summary of outcomes - Customers and Communities

- Open day held at Warwick Court to promote courses to be held in the communal lounge, particularly arts and crafts and basic computer skills
- Multi-storey inspections held by members of the Multi-storey SIG to monitor whether the service standards are being achieved
- Winter 'Here and Now' roadshows taken place across our sheltered schemes to give residents the opportunity to speak with a scheme officer in person
- Residents meeting held at Kays Cottages to discuss and address issues arising at the scheme including possible changes to the entrance including use of a ramp and repairs needed
- ASB SIG implemented recommendations from previous TALISMAN inspection around average length of time for a case to be open
- Craft course held at Warwick Court on behalf of Gateshead Council's adult learning to utilise the recently refurbished communal lounge and encourage residents to develop their skills and knowledge
- Quarterly grounds maintenance meeting held with customers to address issues around complaints and compliments, Saltwell Park, dog fouling on estates and how the various funding streams can be utilised in the coming year.

## Appendix 2: Venues of involvement activities

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Civic Centre	14
Primary school	2
Community centre	20
Communal lounge	20
Library/Caedmon Hall	3
International Business Centre	2
Multi storey block	13
B&Q Scotswood	1
Other/survey	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>

### Appendix 3: Neighbourhood area of involvement activities

Area	Amount
East	7
Central	48
South	8
Inner West	8
West	5
Other/survey	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>

## Appendix 4: Outcomes from SIG Groups

A number of outcomes have been achieved by SIGs during the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015: -

- **Involvement –**
  - members approved the annual TPAS membership to help VFM in terms of reduced cost of courses and access to wider information
  - Group members were involved in the production of the Moving Forward programme for 2015/16 and approved the final draft
  - The group analysed the data shared with Mears operatives using handheld devices when visiting properties, with customers making suggested amendments to improve this process
  - Members involved in developing evidence gathering for the CSE accreditation based on their customer service experiences
  - Members were involved in the development of the Stonewall Equality Index Programme submission
  - The group reviewed and approved the 2013/14 Newcastle Eagles Hoops for Health evaluation to help shape the programme for 2014/15
  
- **Older Persons –**
  - members approved name change from ‘roadshow’ to ‘drop in’ for the sheltered scheme meetings
  - Members were involved in a dementia awareness session to help increase the number of ‘dementia friends’ to provide support to those in need
  - Members reviewed and agreed the updated leaflet to be used to promote Sheltered Scheme and Care Call service
  
- **Home –**
  - Home SIG discussed and agreed new targets for the coming year as well as Home**Repairs** and Investment end of year performance
  - Members reviewed, set and agreed targets for the coming year.
  
- **Leasehold –**
  - Leaseholders influenced Gateshead Council’s ‘Right to Buy’ offer notice and offered suggestions for improvements as well as reviewing and amending the internal painting booklet
  - Members discussed and agreed performance targets for 2015/16
  - Members reviewed and made improvements to the painting programme leaflet
  - The group reviewed and made suggested amendments to the ‘Guide to being a Leaseholder’ booklet
  - Members made amendments to the Service Charge booklet to make it more appealing to readers
  - Improvements have been made to the Painting programme protocol.

- **Multi-storey –**
  - Officer from Gateshead Council’s Climate Change team gave information about the proposed district heating system and members had the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback
  - Members carried out multi storey inspections to check whether the service standards are being achieved
  - Multi storey members gave feedback on the proposed format of High Rise news
  - Reviewed and agreed the Concierge service standards
  - Discussed and agreed the content of High Rise News
  - Agreed for a customer working group to meet and review estate tours in multi storey blocks.
  
- **Value for money –**
  - Members requested VFM presentations from service managers across the company to hear how their service is achieving value for money
  - Customers endorsed the framework for future SIG meetings
  - Members were involved in making proposals around how to maintain VFM as a key focus for the company
  - Group members agreed to receive information electronically, to support value for money in terms of cost of post and time taken to send
  - The group made suggestions to implement a strapline for any information going out about VFM, which has been agreed by Communications team.
  
- **Anti-social behaviour –**
  - Members were consulted around the procedural guidance document being produced for staff around hoarding
  - Neighbourhood nuisance leaflet reviewed by members
  - Customers fed into and agreed the work plan for 2015/16
  - Members were involved in developing the procedure to tackle untidy gardens, in particular the wording of letters sent to customers
  - Group involved in consultation with Community Safety on the promotion of the launch of the Community Trigger pilot, on behalf of all Tyne and Wear authorities
  - Involved in performance monitoring and implementing improvements and suggesting amendments to indicator targets for the current year
  - Group to be involved in further work around the nature of ASB cases and actions taken that resulted in eviction orders being obtained.