



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

10 September 2015

Title: Customer Involvement Activity - Update

Report of: Managing Director

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on customer involvement activity for the first quarter of 2015/16.

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. This report demonstrates where we support the key actions within the company's five year strategic plan's key objective of 'Supporting tenants and sustaining tenancies and neighbourhoods'.
4. The 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

5. During the period, 1 April to 30 June 2015, over 75 involvement activities took place.
6. Customers were involved in various activities including panel and customer meetings, Service Improvement Groups, drop in sessions, forums, focus groups, mystery shopping exercises and training courses.
7. Customers have been involved in our involvement activities on over 2,000 occasions although some may have been involved in more than one activity.
8. 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.

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

Key outcomes of involvement

11. There have been a number of outcomes from customer involvement during this period which are highlighted below:
 - TALISMAN agreed a new design for final reports and to have a joint meeting with SIG members to promote respective achievements and future plans
 - The Community Fund was promoted at Gateshead Council's funding event in April which aims to encourage a greater number of applications
 - New members were established for the LGBT network following links made with a young persons' LGBT group
 - A gardening course was held with a new training provider for the 2015/16 Moving Forward programme which received very positive feedback due to the hands on approach and attendees being able to take plants home with them that they'd potted
 - A Mystery Shopping exercise was conducted around the multi-viewing process following a recommendation of the TALISMAN Voids Inspection which received positive feedback
 - The Leasehold SIG agreed changes to the standard reminder letters for gas servicing, reviewed and agreed performance against Key Performance Indicators and Service Standards and scrutinised the leasehold service charge actual accounts prior to issue
 - An annual joint forum was held following requests from members which reviewed and made proposed changes to the Single Equality Scheme. Some members will continue to meet as part of a focus group until the revised document is completed
 - Multi-storey inspections were carried out by customers across blocks to check that they are achieving the required service standards in place
 - An event was held in Warwick Court as part of the block's communal lounge launch, encouraging customers to enrol onto digital and craft courses to increase their skills and knowledge
 - Two customers from the Multi Storey Service Improvement Group attended a presentation about door entry systems to help increase their understanding of the investment and procurement process around this matter and to share this learning with other SIG members
 - We are working in partnership with Gem Arts and Gateshead Council's Safer Communities team with pupils from two senior schools, Heworth Grange and Joseph Swan. Students are working with an artist to produce some animation and poster materials about anti-hate crime. These will be used to help us raise awareness of this issue among our customers and can be used more widely across Gateshead schools. An event will be held in September to launch the final art pieces.

Involvement database

12. We regularly review the Involvement database to ensure it's up to date and that people who are on the database are those who still wish to be involved. There has been a slight decrease of 22 involved customers since December 2014 totalling 927 members. We regularly promote involvement opportunities at various events we attend and to new tenants and leaseholders to encourage new customers and increase membership onto the database.
13. The representation of involved BME customers continues to be high at 7.67%, which is more than double our overall customer profile, indicating that our work to engage with the BME community has had a positive impact.
14. The number of 'over 75s' has increased since December 2014 and both this and the 60-74 age group have a higher representation of involvement compared with the overall customer profile.
15. Appendix 4 to this report displays profile information of our involved tenants and leaseholders compared with our overall customer profile.

Performance against service standards

16. 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.
17. At the end of the first quarter performance was as follows;
 - There were 927 involved customers on our database at the end of the first quarter, exceeding the target of 890
 - There were 23 attendees on customer training courses by 30 June 2015. The programme will continue to be delivered throughout the year so this figure will increase as more courses take place
 - Satisfaction with feedback following involvement is reported in the second quarter
 - 96.97% of tenants are satisfied that their views are taken into account which exceeds our target of 72.50%
 - We have attended 7 events during this period. This is slightly lower than the same point last year, however, there are a number of events no longer taking place due to external factors such as a lack of volunteers and funding available, hence the reduced amount we can attend. We will continue to actively engage with community groups to find out about events that are taking place for us to attend and represent the company.

External Recognition

18. At the end of last year the company was 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.
19. We were successful in winning the award for ‘Excellence in Co-regulation’. Two involved customers attended the event to accept the award and be recognised for their achievement on behalf of all involved customers.
20. The TPAS National Awards Final 2015 took place in July 2015 and the Southern finalists Paragon won this award.

Future activity

21. 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:
 - As part of our Opportunity Knocks programme, we will continue to attend a range of community festivals during the summer to promote involvement activities available and the range of services we provide
 - We will 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 as well as improving their health and wellbeing
 - An annual report will be developed with tenants and leaseholders for 2014/15
 - We will begin a review of our service standards consulting with staff and customers
 - We will continue to work with Gem Arts and in September attend a launch of the final artwork being produced by year 8 and 9 pupils of Heworth Grange Comprehensive and Joseph Swan school about anti-hate crime
 - As part of the 2015/16 Moving Forward programme, decorating workshops will be delivered to customers by Mears, and will be held in community venues across Gateshead
 - A joint meeting will be held between TALISMAN members and other involved customers of SIGs and forums, to share information and learning.

Link to values

22. This report relates to the Company values of being: -
 - Customer focused
 - Inclusive, valuing diversity.

Impact on tenants

23. 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.
24. 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

25. Failure to engage with customers was identified as a key strategic risk for the company.
26. 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

27. 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

28. 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.
29. Support is available to assist people with additional needs to access involvement opportunities and this is regularly promoted.
30. 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

31. 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.
32. Value for money is considered within Service Improvement Groups when making decisions, for example, agreeing what training courses to run in the Moving Forward programme taking into account monetary costs and the impact they will have on individuals and the wider community.

Environmental implications

33. 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

34. The Involvement Service Improvement Group (SIG) is regularly updated with the progress of involvement across all services and the outcomes which result.
35. 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

36. 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

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

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Appendix 1; Summary of involvement activity

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Service Improvement Group	9	61
Drop in	11	108
Surveys	1	3
Surgery	2	6
Meeting	11	80
Event	7	1,458
Mystery shopping	4	9
Training	20	159
Forum	1	21
Focus group	1	8
Workshops	3	89
Other	8	13
Total	78	2,015

Summary of involvement activity – Corporate Services

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Surveys	1	3
Service Improvement Group	4	27
Meeting	10	78
Surgery	2	6
Event	6	1,450
Workshop	3	89
Training	4	23
Drop in	2	60
Mystery Shopping	4	9
Forum	1	21
Total	37	1,766

Summary of outcomes – Corporate services

- The 2015/16 Moving Forward programme was launched in April with new providers hosting the gardening and health courses during this period, both receiving positive feedback
- The Complaints panel has met on a regular basis to analyse complaints performance and identifying service improvements, as well as members receiving data protection training
- A funding event hosted by Gateshead Council was attended to help promote our services, particularly the Community Fund to encourage more applications
- A Mystery shopping exercise was conducted around the multi-viewing process to gain feedback about the process and check we are adhering to the correct procedures
- Digital drop-ins were held with customers to help increase their knowledge of accessing digital services and getting online
- The first pre-tenancy training course was held as part of a pilot to help increase awareness of our bidding process and affordability of living independently aimed at young applicants. A further three pilot sessions will be delivered and evaluated.

Summary of involvement activity – Customers and Communities

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Event	1	8
Service Improvement Group	5	34
Meeting	1	2
Drop in	9	48
Training	16	136
Focus group	1	8
Other	8	13
Total	41	249

Summary of outcomes - Customers and Communities

- Sheltered scheme drop ins were held across the schemes to give residents the opportunity to raise any issues they may have with their scheme officer on a regular basis and identify any areas for improvements
- Multi Storey inspections took place during this period by customer inspectors to check the blocks are achieving the service standards in place
- A Multi Storey Service Improvement Group was held where customers received information about investment in multi storey blocks for 2015/16
- An event was held in Warwick Court to encourage customers to enrol onto computer and craft courses as part of the council's adult learning programme
- An Older Person's Service Improvement Group was held where members approved topics for the four different drop-in sessions for the coming year.

Appendix 2; Venues of involvement activities

Venue	Amount
Civic Centre	20
Warwick Court	18
Community centre	14
Sheltered scheme	10
Multi storey block	7
School	3
Library/Caedmon Hall	1
Other/survey	5
Total	78

Appendix 3; Neighbourhood area of involvement activities

Area	Amount
East	3
Central	60
South	10
Inner West	2
West	1
Other/survey	2
Total	78

Appendix 4; Profile information of involved customers

Gender:

	Involvement Database June 2015		Involvement Database December 2014		Customer profile June 2015	
Female	583	62.89%	596	62.80%	11,265	58.95%
Male	344	37.11%	353	37.20%	7844	41.04%
Blank	-	-	-	-	2	0.01%
Total	927	100%	949	100%	19,111	100%

Ethnicity:

	Involvement Database June 2015		Involvement Database December 2014		Customer profile June 2015	
Asian Or Asian British Bangladeshi	1	0.11%	1	0.10%	15	0.08%
Asian Or Asian British Indian	2	0.22%	3	0.32%	8	0.04%
Asian Or Asian British Other	11	1.19%	10	1.05%	113	0.59%
Asian Or Asian British Pakistan	13	1.40%	13	1.37%	17	0.09%
Black Or Black British African	34	3.67%	35	3.69%	220	1.15%
Black Or Black British Caribbean	-	-	-	-	5	0.03%
Black Or Black British Other	1	0.11%	1	0.10%	26	0.14%
Chinese	1	0.11%	1	0.10%	20	0.10%
Mixed Other	3	0.32%	4	0.42%	28	0.15%
Mixed White & Asian	-	-	-	-	19	0.10%
Mixed White & Black African	2	0.22%	2	0.21%	15	0.08%
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	-	-	-	-	8	0.04%
Other	3	0.32%	3	0.32%	93	0.49%
Total BME	71	7.67%	73	7.68%	587	3.07%
Refused	1	0.11%	1	0.10%	48	0.25%
White British	759	81.88%	781	82.31%	17,991	94.14%
White Irish	1	0.11%	1	0.10%	34	0.18%
White Other	13	1.40%	13	1.37%	351	1.84%
(blank)	82	8.83%	80	8.44%	100	0.52%
Grand Total	927	100%	949	100%	19,111	100%

Disability:

Does the tenant have a disability?	Involvement Database June 2015		Involvement Database December 2014		Customer Profile June 2015	
N	633	68.28%	647	68.18%	13,516	70.72%
Y	291	31.40%	300	31.61%	5,377	28.14%
Yes but type not disclosed	-	-	-	-	101	0.53%
Refused	-	-	-	-	35	0.18%
(blank)	3	0.32%	2	0.21%	78	0.41%
Not disclosed	-	-	-	-	4	0.02%
Total	927	100%	949	100%	19,111	100%

Age:

	Involvement Database June 2015		Involvement Database December 2014		Customer Profile June 2015	
No date of birth	114	12.29%	114	12.01%	2	0.01%
Under 25	17	1.83%	19	2.00%	639	3.34%
25-39	124	13.38%	132	13.91%	4051	21.20%
40-49	104	11.22%	121	12.75%	3215	16.82%
50-59	137	14.78%	136	14.33%	3422	17.91%
60-74	261	28.16%	262	27.61%	4539	23.75%
75 and over	170	18.34%	165	17.39%	3243	16.97%
Total	927	100%	949	100%	19,111	100%