



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

5 November 2015

Title: Customer Involvement Activity - Update

Report of: Customer Support Manager

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on customer involvement activity for the second 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 July to 30 September 2015, over 70 involvement activities took place.
6. Customers were involved in various activities including Board, 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 2,245 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:
 - In July, we worked in partnership with the Wise Group to host a Talent Match project which is aimed at young people who are looking for employment. This is a Big Lottery funded project which aims to get young people into employment or training. Five people attended this session and continued to engage with the lead facilitator to find employment or training. One attendee has subsequently found employment in security, two undertook a two week training programme with Rolls Royce, with the potential of a job with Proctor and Gamble. Another attendee gained an appointment with 'Generator', an organisation which supports people who want to enter the music industry.
 - A joint meeting took place between TALISMAN members and other involved customers of SIGs and forums, to share information and learning of what the groups have achieved and to encourage new members to TALISMAN.
 - In partnership with Gem Arts and Gateshead Council's Safer Communities team, pupils from Heworth Grange and Joseph Swan Comprehensive schools completed the artwork around anti hate crime and will be launched during Hate Crime Awareness Week in October.
 - The Annual Report for 2014/15 has been developed with a focus group of tenants and leaseholders. This is a reduced version from last year's to help support the company's approach around value for money, but will include more information on our website.
 - We attended various events as part of our Opportunity Knocks campaign during this period to raise awareness among local communities of the opportunities for people to get involved with us and help to shape our services.
 - As part of the Moving Forward training programme, we held a Social Media Made Simple course delivered by the Communications Manager and Involvement and Diversity Officer which received positive feedback from attendees and initial feedback will help to develop the next session.
 - Presentation delivered to school children at St Joseph's Primary school in Birtley, to educate them on the importance of taking pride on your estate including the impact of litter.
 - We worked in partnership with the Illegal Money Lending Team to carry out a door knocking exercise in August in the Springwell area to raise awareness among residents of the dangers of illegal money lending.

External Recognition

12. In July, we attended the TPAS National Awards final with some involved customers, as we were shortlisted for the Excellence in Co-regulation award. The southern finalists, Paragon, were successful in winning this award.

Service Improvement Groups (SIGs)

13. Service Improvement Groups continue to meet on a regular basis to help drive improvements around service delivery across the company.
14. 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.**
15. All groups receive performance information relating to the service's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or service standards at least every six months.
16. 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.
17. Since the previous SIG update in May 2015, the group have influenced services and achieved a range of outcomes including:
 - The Leasehold SIG have requested and agreed content for a leaflet to be produced around Cyclical Maintenance to help customers understand what it is and how it helps the company achieve value for money. Members also reviewed the repairs process around customer satisfaction to ensure it is qualitative and quantitative. SIG members also reviewed the standard letters issued to leaseholders and made suggestions for improvements.
 - Involvement SIG members approved the artwork produced by school children around the anti-hate crime project carried out in partnership with Gem Arts and Gateshead Council. Planning work has begun around an involvement event in December and feedback from Northern Pride was shared with members with a view to further awareness raising work that can be carried out about reporting centres in the area.
 - Home SIG members received performance information for comments and discussed the five year strategic plan and how the group feeds into this. Members have also been involved in the review and development of a publication about condensation.
 - Multi storey SIG members looked at High Rise news and what future articles can focus on and discussed 'a day in the life of'. Members were also updated about the progress of the CCTV review with two customers attending a presentation about it to increase understanding about this process.
 - The Older Persons' SIG members requested to go on a tour and hold the next few meetings in communal lounges as a way to reach out to potential new members and identify service improvements that may be necessary. They have also carried out some work around the quality and content of notice boards within the sheltered schemes and carried out an appraisal of Angel Court's communal lounge.

- The Anti-social behaviour SIG members were consulted on a draft leaflet called 'tackling anti-social behaviour' with comments received feeding into the final version which will be used with all ASB complaints and will be available on our website and in housing offices. Members were also consulted on the Gem Arts project and offered feedback on both the animation and poster campaign.

Moving Forward customer training – update

18. Moving Forward courses are delivered by a range of providers including TPAS, The 4Cs, Traincon learning and The Gateshead Housing Company.
19. We will be working with our contractor Mears, to deliver decorating workshops to our tenants and leaseholders in community venues across Gateshead.
20. The Moving Forward programme combines a range of scheduled with demand led sessions. This flexible approach has shown to be an effective way to engage our customers in training and building practical skills, helping them to become actively involved in shaping services or to use these skills in other parts of their lives.
21. There are ten scheduled courses in this year's programme compared to eight last year. This now includes two 'Social media made simple' and two 'Managing your stress' courses which were previously only available as demand led.
22. In addition we now offer Made of Money course which is a six week programme made up of six two-hour sessions, going into more detail around managing your money covering topics including spending habits and household finances, credit, debt, communication around money and children and money. There is a seventh week available for courses where attendees have young children aged between 5 and 11 and they would be invited to the final session to involve them in this.

Current Position

23. A total of six courses have been delivered during the period 1 April to 30 September 2015. There have been a total of 48 customers attending the training, which is an average of 8 people per course.
24. As part of our continued commitment to help more residents access our services online, we have continued to hold digital drop ins across Gateshead to help develop their skills and become more digitally able, reducing the potential risk of isolation by increasing communication links.
25. In addition to this, in September we also delivered a Social Media Made Simple course. This was delivered by the Communications Manager and an Involvement and Diversity Officer, which reduced costs of using an external provider. The response to this session was very positive and we will use the feedback received to help develop the session due to take place in February 2016.
26. A report will be brought to committee at the end of year to provide a full update on the full Moving Forward training programme 2015/16.

External learning

27. TALISMAN members have been on a range of external courses to increase their skills and knowledge and enable them to perform the required functions within their role on the panel. The courses group members have attended include:
- Scrutiny, Get involved – Trafford Hall
 - Effective Chairing Skills – Trafford Hall
 - Behaviours and Managing Stress – Trafford Hall

Performance against service standards

28. 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.
29. At the end of the second quarter performance was as follows: -
- There were 936 involved customers on our database at the end of the second quarter, exceeding the target of 890
 - There were 48 attendees on customer training courses by 30 September 2015. The programme will continue to be delivered throughout the year so this figure will increase as more courses take place.
 - 86.91% of tenants were satisfied with feedback following involvement.
 - 68.30% of tenants are satisfied that their views are taken into account which is below our target of 74%. We will work proactively to understand the reasons behind this reduction in satisfaction and work to achieve the set target.
 - We have attended 8 events during this period. 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.

Future activity

30. The following activities are still 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:
- An event to support National Older Persons day will be held in October where a Boccia (French bowls) tournament will take place between existing sheltered scheme teams, to promote to other scheme residents who may want to take part in this sport, as well as an opportunity to find out about getting involved with other organisations
 - 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 as well as improving their health and wellbeing

- The artwork produced by school children of Heworth Grange and Joseph Swan about anti-hate crime will be launched in October during Hate Crime Awareness Week
- 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.

Link to values

31. This report relates to the Company values of being:

- Customer focused
- Inclusive, valuing diversity.

Impact on tenants

32. 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.

33. 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

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

35. 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

36. 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

37. 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.

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

39. 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

40. 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.
41. 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

42. 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

43. The Involvement Service Improvement Group (SIG) is regularly updated with the progress of involvement across all services and the outcomes which result.
44. 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

45. 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

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

Appendix 1: Summary of involvement activity

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Service Improvement Group	10	83
Drop in	2	6
Surveys	3	18
Meeting	12	94
Event	8	1,758
Mystery shopping	4	4
Training	7	58
Forum	2	15
Focus group	11	57
Workshops	2	55
Other	10	100
Total	71	2,248

Summary of involvement activity – Corporate Services

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Surveys	3	18
Service Improvement Group	5	37
Meeting	11	90
Focus group	8	36
Event	7	1,658
Workshop	2	55
Training	4	33
Mystery Shopping	4	4
Forum	2	15
Total	46	1,946

Summary of outcomes – Corporate services

- New course held as part of the Moving Forward training programme on How to Lead a Healthy lifestyle, which focussed on mindfulness and wellbeing which received positive feedback
- Focus groups held with customers to look at the Guide to Services as part of the review of service standards being carried out across the company
- Focus groups held with tenants and leaseholders to review and develop the Single Equality Scheme and ensure it's up to date and inclusive of information such as hate crime, digital and financial inclusion
- Pre-tenancy training course held as part of a pilot scheme to provide information and advice to young applicants on our waiting list about the rights and responsibilities of being a tenant and the potential costs of this, with an aim to reduce the turnover of our tenancies among young people
- Disabled persons and BME housing forums held to meeting with customers from specific community groups and ensure specific issues around access to our services are addressed where necessary
- Attended Northern Pride to engage with our LGBT community and consult with them about their experiences of hate crime and promote the LGBT network.

Summary of involvement activity – Customers and Communities

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Event	1	100
Service Improvement Group	5	46
Meeting	1	4
Drop in	2	6
Training	3	25
Focus group	3	21
Other	10	100
Total	25	302

Summary of outcomes - Customers and Communities

- Grounds maintenance meeting held to discuss issues including service standards, fly tipping and dog fouling issues in the central neighbourhood
- Arts and crafts and computer training courses held for residents in Warwick Court to learn new skills as well as an opportunity to meet new people from their block and improve networking opportunities
- Inspections undertaken in multi storey blocks by customers to check whether the blocks are achieving the service standards in place
- Multi storey Service Improvement Group (SIG) held which looked at various issues including an update on the TALISMAN review of customer services, progress review of the smoke alarm monitoring and CCTV, investment work programmed in multi blocks
- Sheltered scheme meeting held to provide an opportunity for customers to raise any issues they may have in their home
- Anti-social behaviour SIG held which consulted members on the draft 'tackling anti-social behaviour leaflet' and shared the final draft of the Gem Arts project.

Appendix 2: Venues of involvement activities

Venue	Amount
Civic Centre	23
Warwick Court	4
Community centre	14
Sheltered scheme	6
Multi storey block	7
School	3
Library/Caedmon Hall	4
Other	7
NA	3
Total	71

Appendix 3: Neighbourhood area of involvement activities

Area	Amount
East	2
Central	44
South	10
Inner West	5
West	3
Other/survey	3
External	4
Total	71