

 Northwards Housing North Manchester's Council Homes		Report to: Northwards Housing Board 11 November 2014		Item No: <h1>12a</h1>	
Title:		Resident involvement			
Date:		22 October 2014			
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Confidential:		No			
For: (Please tick action required)		NOTING ✓		DISCUSSION	
				APPROVAL ✓	
PURPOSE OF REPORT					
To update the Board on changes to resident involvement arrangements, and to propose a new set of arrangements for the future.					
RECOMMENDATION					
The Board is asked to note the update and give in principle agreement to the new arrangements as the basis of consultation with involved residents in relation to the detail of how the new arrangements will be implemented. If the Board agrees to this, then a further report will be brought back confirming the detailed arrangements for implementation from April 2015.					
IMPLICATIONS					
Risk Management		In seeking to improve our arrangements for resident involvement, the proposals within the report are intended to mitigate against the risk of failing to meet customer expectations or failing to meet the requirements in the housing management specification which forms part of our management agreement with the Council.			
Regulatory & legal compliance		The proposals within the report are intended to enhance our ability, within the resources available to us, to meet the requirements set out in relation to resident involvement in the housing management specification which forms part of our management agreement with the Council.			

Consultation/Consideration:

	Yes, No or N/A:	Name:	Date:
Sub-Committee:	No		
Area Panel:	No		
Task Groups:	No		
Ward Councillors:	No		

1. Background

1.1 In July 2013 the Board agreed revised arrangements for resident involvement.

1.2 These included:

- A different role and remit for the area panels, with a looser, less formal structure and approach;
- A new performance monitoring group.

1.3 These new arrangements were the subject of a further report to the Board in September 2013, setting out the terms of reference of the “new-style” panels and performance monitoring group.

1.4 The new arrangements were intended to get more people involved, improve the quality of involvement and use staff and residents’ time more effectively. Board members noted at the time that the arrangements we had had in place since Northwards’ inception had begun to feel as if they had run their course, with attendances and participation at meetings falling. Board members also noted that servicing those arrangements was fairly resource-intensive, and the arrangements no longer seemed to be providing value for money.

1.5 The Board agreed that these new arrangements would be tried for 12 months and reviewed at the end of that period.

1.6 This paper reports back on the new arrangements and proposes some further changes for the future.

2 Review of the new arrangements

2.1 The new arrangements have had limited success and “mixed reviews”.

2.2 The area panels have not been especially well attended. They have attracted only small numbers of new people. Overall attendance levels have been low. At the same time they have also given rise to feedback from some of our more established involved residents that they don’t like the looser, less formal approach inherent in the ‘new-style’ panels.

2.3 As expected, organising the new-style panels takes up less staff time than the old-style panels used to. They haven’t however led to a discernible improvement in terms of the breadth or depth of involvement. They are also not wholly popular with our older more established residents.

2.4 The performance monitoring group has attracted only small numbers of people. Meetings have been lively, and positive contributions have been made to discussions about performance. Clearly there is a role for residents in monitoring performance. Ultimately, however, these discussions have been with very small numbers of people. One has therefore to ask if there is a better way of involving those people whilst bringing other people into the discussion and using staff time more effectively.

3 Proposed new arrangements

3.1 It is proposed that in future our resident involvement arrangements should consist of the following:

- (i) An updated, relaunched and rebranded “involved residents network” or similar in essence a list of people who have expressed an interest in being involved (and who haven't been excluded for some reason).
- (ii) Three events a year by open invitation to the above and linked into our business planning, performance monitoring and budget setting processes. The intention would be to focus our resources on encouraging and maximising participation in a smaller number of events. It should be noted that we have run a number of similar events and these have proved to be popular and well-attended.
- (iii) Area panels which are convened annually for the purpose of deciding what to spend the environmental budgets on. This could consist of one meeting or more depending on local requirements. Timing of these would be tied into capital programme planning, and membership would be by open invitation to members of the “involved residents network” in each area.

3.2 The area panels could also be convened on an ad hoc basis for other reasons: for instance where we are consulting on something which only or primarily affects one area; or where we want to consult residents across the whole Northwards “patch” but have taken the view that in the particular instance this would best be done on an area basis rather than in one go.

3.3 The following is also proposed:

- (i) Tenants' view will continue to operate as it does now
- (ii) Tenant and resident groups will operate and receive support much as they do now, and we will continue to encourage and support the formation of new groups where interest is expressed
- (iii) We will continue to support the high rise forum, leaseholders' forum, retirement housing forum, LGBT forum and other specific or ad hoc forums as agreed
- (iv) Support for Tea Mobile and other locally-based community events will continue much as it does now

3.4 In addition to the above, consultation will take place on more specific matters by the most appropriate method using the network (see above) and more widely where appropriate.

3.5 The intention in all of this is also to create strong links into the digital inclusion agenda: looking at ways of getting people involved above and beyond more “traditional” methods, and stimulating more involvement via social media if that is something people want.

3.6 Under the proposed arrangements performance monitoring would be incorporated into the work of tenants' view, as opposed to being the focus of a separate group. As a minimum, performance would also be reported and discussed at one of the three events referred to at 3.1 (ii) above.

3.7 It is proposed that we establish a “planning group” to help plan and set the agendas for the “resident network” group. We would anticipate that this group would be made

up from members of tenants' view along with chairs and vice chairs of residents' forums and the old-style area panels. This group would be likely to meet quarterly.

3.8 We think these new arrangements will build on what works and is popular now whilst addressing the concerns of residents and staff about the efficiency and efficacy of what we currently have in place.

3.9 As they make better use of staff time, we will look at whether the new arrangements make it possible for us to make a saving in relation to staffing costs.

4 Recommendation

4.1 The Board is asked to note the update and give in principle agreement to the new arrangements as the basis of consultation with involved residents in relation to the detail of how the new arrangements will be implemented. If the Board agrees to this, then a further report will be brought back confirming the detailed arrangements for implementation from April 2015.