

**PEP report on review and development of a
Tenant Compact for Northwards Housing**

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Appendix 1 – Notes from Task Group meeting 8th March
Appendix 2- Notes from Task Group meeting 15th March
Appendix 3 – Comments from Mike Stevens on staff changes

1. Background

PEP were appointed in February 2006 to consider how Northwards Housing may develop a tenant compact which reflects the needs of tenants of Northwards Housing.

2. Reviewing the existing compact

PEP carried out the following activities to review and provide recommendations for the development of a tenant compact for Northwards Housing

- Undertook a desk top review of Manchester City Councils tenant compact
- Met with tenants at two task group meetings to explore in detail what tenants would like to see in their compact.

Notes from these meetings are attached as Appendix 1 and 2.

2.1 General Comments

From our review of the Manchester compact and having spoken with tenants we feel that the Manchester compact does not meet the needs of Northwards tenants. We feel that a new document needs to be produced which builds on the current compact.

The Manchester compact contains a number of procedures and policies – we feel these should not be in the compact document itself and recommend that Northwards does not put any policy or procedure in the compact, however they should make reference to and signpost people to any related information. For example the resident involvement policy and strategy, constitutions for tenants groups etc

2.3 Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide Northwards with a broad framework on which to develop a compact which meets the needs of Northwards tenants.

3. Recommendations on the core standards

During the review process we have assessed Manchester's compact against the core standards as laid out in the ODPMS National Framework for Tenant Compacts.

To ensure that all aspects of these core standards have been addressed we will set out our recommendations according to the core standard headings. We recommend that these headings are changed to more user friendly terms in the actual compact document.

3.1 Housing Services

In this section we recommend that you **identify the services** you will be consulting residents on and the **methods** you are going to use to do this.

Page 24 of the ODPM's framework for tenant compacts outlines the services tenants may be involved in.

Tenants felt that page 8 of Manchester's compact clearly set out how tenants would be involved in the housing service, however it they felt that Northwards needed to have its own task groups meet the needs of Northwards tenants. Tenants felt that new task groups should be set up in the following areas

- Housing Management Services – to cover lettings, voids, ASB etc
- Repairs
- Equality and Diversity – to look at these issues in relation to policy and procedure
- Communication – to look at how the ALMO communicates with tenants

It was felt that these groups should have a clear link to the Area Panels and should report to them on their work. Clear action plans should also be developed for these groups, which include some key performance indicators.

We note that Manchester has a caretaking compact, we would recommend that this compact is adopted until tenants have had the opportunity to review the compact. We would suggest that this is reviewed when tenants begin to look at developing local compacts.

It was felt that the Area Panels will ensure that tenants are involved in all aspects of the housing service.

In addition to the groups above we feel Northwards should set up a **Resident Involvement Task Group**. We feel that as resident involvement is developing at Northwards this would be a key group who would look at

- Developing a menu of involvement options
- Reviewing the effectiveness of involvement options
- Monitoring training
- Developing and monitoring the compact action plan

Appendix 1 identifies some new methods of involvement that tenants wish Northwards to explore. We would recommend that the task group looks at this as soon as practicable.

3.1.1 Menu of Involvement

On pages 11 – 16 of Manchester's compact the Housing services approach to consultation is outlined. Tenants felt that this section was too large and PEP feel that it does not set out clearly enough how tenants can get involved.

PEP recommend that Northwards develops a clear section on how tenants can get involved and outline their 'menu' of involvement. It may be useful to put this information in a table. Below we have identified the menu of options that we feel Northwards currently offers

Opportunities for involvement	What they do	Level of Commitment
Tenant Board Member		Meets every x weeks.
Area Panel		
Housing Management Services Task Group		
Repairs Task Group		
Equality and Diversity Task Group		
Communication task group		
Resident Involvement Task Group		
Tenants and Residents Groups		
Contact Groups*		
Tenant Inspectors		
Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) focus group		
Focus Group	Groups get together to discuss a specific subject in detail	Usually a one off meeting
Leaseholders Group (to be decided)		
Estate Walkabouts		
Surveys		
Tenant Management Organisations		

*Tenants were keen to see that the role of Contact groups was formalised so that they could access some funds to cover expenses and to ensure that they were built in to consultation processes.

3.2 Standards for resources for resident involvement

Tenants at the task group felt the following areas needed to be addressed in this section

- Budget available to support resident involvement
- Support provided from tenant participation team

- Training available

3.2.1 Budget

Tenants felt that the budget is clearly outlined in Manchester's compact and they would expect the same level of clarity in the Northwards compact. In addition to the budget outlined tenants wanted to see some funds made available to support contact groups. (Please see appendix 1 page 4).

3.2.2. Support from the tenant participation team

We feel that a section in resources should clearly outline how resident involvement will be supported and facilitated. We understand that Northwards is currently reviewing this and therefore this section should be developed when the review is complete.

3.2.3 Training

Tenants identified they would like to retain the training offered under Manchester's Compact, this is currently

- Induction training for new staff
- Basic Book Keeping
- Committee Skills
- Involving Everybody
- Fundraising
- Equal Opportunities
- Effective Chairing and Secretary skills
- Northwards to signpost groups to appropriate IT training

Tenants wanted to ensure that in-house training is constantly evaluated to ensure that is of a high standard. PEP recommends that the resident involvement task group monitor the quality and appropriateness of training provided.

PEP feel that this section should also note that tenants can access external training and clear brief information should be given to tenants on how they can access this.

3.3 Standards for Meetings

The Manchester compact does not contain a clear concise section on this issue. We discussed this with tenants and they felt the following standards should be in this section

- Agenda, minutes from meetings and any other supporting information sent out 1 week in advance of a meeting
- All information should be in plain English
- Appropriate refreshments should be provided at meetings
- All meetings should be conducted in a transparent manner
- Meetings should not last longer than 2 hours
- If they do run for longer, adequate breaks should be built in to the agenda

- Ensure that any special requirements are met e.g. written information in large type, translators etc
- Ensure that all meeting venues are accessible to all
- All participants in meeting should abide by code of conduct
- All meetings should have a clear purpose
- Timely feedback from meetings should be provided (you may wish to specify timescales for this)

Staff at Northwards will need to consider these standards and decide if anything needs adding to this and ensure that staff can commit to these standards.

3.4 Standards for Information

The Manchester has a very brief section on this on page 15 of the compact. We recommend that this section is expanded and tailored to the specific needs of Northwards.

We recommend that you outline in a brief sentence that you are committed to providing information on all aspects of service delivery. You should then state how you will do this. Tenants felt this should be done by

- Newsletter (compact should state how many times a year this will be produced)
- Annual Report
- Information leaflets
- Internet
- Welcome Pack
- E-mail bulletins

Northwards should also state that it will provide information in a range of formats and languages as appropriate.

PEP recommends that tenants are involved in checking all information that is sent out to ensure that is understandable and in plain English. This could be done through task groups and the area panels. All documents could have a 'tenants tick' to show they have been approved by tenants.

3.5 Standards for tenant groups

Tenants felt that the first two pages in the Manchester compact regarding this section clearly outline what is required and this should be kept at it is.

Tenants felt that the following two pages should be removed and the following additions made to the section

- Correspondence to TRA's should be sent to the Chair and Secretary
- Groups should be advised of changes to staff (See appendix 3)
- TRA's and Northwards should have a mutual respect for one another
- Reference noting and supporting community projects TRA's undertake
- Clear details of who groups should contact for support and guidance

- If a TRA requires a member of staff to attend a meeting 28 days notice will be given. Northwards will ensure that an appropriate member of staff attends meetings when notice has been given.

Tenants noted that support should be offered to assist TRA's with the completion of grant forms. It was also thought that these forms could be simplified. This is an area the resident involvement task group could explore in more detail.

3.6 Standards for Monitoring and Measuring Performance

This section of the compact should outline how you will monitor the compact and housing services.

We recommend that you detail

- How you will assess customer satisfaction (full survey every 3 years? Sampled survey each year?)
- Role of resident involvement group to monitor compact, effectiveness of involvement methods, monitor numbers participating and outcomes on service delivery and improvement
- Develop an action plan for the compact – this may be a role for the resident involvement task group
- How you will compare your service with that of other organisations
- In line with ODPM's framework set performance measures and targets for tenants satisfaction with
 - Participation arrangements
 - Services, including value for money; and
 - their local area
 -

4. Involving Everyone

PEP feels Northwards should have a specific section in the compact outlining its commitment to encouraging involvement with BME and hard to reach groups. You should detail

- Statement on equality and diversity –you want all tenants to get involved regardless of age,gender, ethnic origin etc
- How you will seek to identify hard to reach groups
- Commitment to developing new ways to engage with tenants
- You will ensure staff and tenants have training on equality and diversity issues
- That you will monitor the range of tenants getting involved

We feel due to the current time constraints in developing the compact you should adopt Manchester's BME compact with a view to developing a Northwards BME compact in 2007/8.

5. Resident Involvement Structure

Tenants were keen to see that a picture of the resident involvement structure was included in the compact. This will enable tenants to see how all the involvement mechanisms fit together.

6. Key Contacts

Tenants wanted to see a page that outlined all the key contact details for staff at Northwards.

7. Introduction to Northwards

PEP feel the beginning of the compact should outline Northwards vision and core values and commitment to resident involvement. There should also be a brief introduction to the compact – what it is and why it is needed.

8. Decision Making

From the tenants we spoke to it was clear that there was uncertainty regarding the role of the Board and Area Panels. We feel it would be beneficial to tenants to outline briefly in the compact their roles and responsibilities.

9. Local Compacts

Tenants who attended the task group were very supportive of developing local compacts. Under the current timescale we recommend you develop your compact for all Northwards tenants and note you will develop local compacts over the coming year, aiming to have them in place by April 2007.

To develop local compacts you will need to ensure you have dedicated staff resources to work locally with residents on this.

10. Shout TMO and Manchester Residents Association

The compact will need to outline Northwards relationship with both these groups.

11. Format

Tenants we spoke to concerning the format and style of the compact felt that

- All sections of the compact should be short and to the point
- A small booklet summarising the compact would be helpful, and that all tenants should receive this
- The full compact should be an A4 size glossy document – however it was felt that a small number of copies should be printed in this format and that is made available to tenants upon request
- Compacts which had colourful pictures in them, particularly of people were felt to make the document look interesting

Summary of Recommendations
Information provided in Northwards Compact

Heading	Detail
Introduction	Outline Northwards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision and values • Commitment to resident involvement • What compact is and reasons why it is needed • Signed agreement between tenants, Northwards and Manchester City Council
Decision Making	Outline role of Management Boards and Area Panels
Housing Services	Outline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service areas residents will be involved in • Menu of options for involvement • Diagram of involvement structure • Commitment to developing local compacts • Adoption of caretaking compact where appropriate
Involving Everyone	Outline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to involving all residents • Development of involvement mechanisms • Adoption of BME compact
Shout TMO	Outline how Northwards will work with Shout
Manchester Residents Association (MRA)	Outline relationship between Northwards and MRA and support they will provide to tenants
Resources	Outline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget available • Training • Staff support for resident involvement
Meetings	Short section on agreed standards
Information	Outline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefly what information is available • How this will be provided
Tenants Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt pages 1 and 2 of Manchester compact, with amendments where appropriate • Add in additional standards agreed by tenants • Do not include specific documents on model constitution, grants etc
Monitoring and Measuring Performance	Outline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and role of resident involvement task group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of compact action plan• How you will assess satisfaction
Key Contacts	Contact details for relevant staff and where to find further information