

CABINET

3 March 2004

TENANT PARTICIPATION (TP) COMPACT REVIEW

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND HOUSING

Contact Officer & TACT Representative: Glynis Cole, Tenant Participation Manager and

Bryan Whitfield

Tel No: 01962 848204 & 01962 777597 respectively

RECENT REFERENCES:

HO4 – Tenant Participation (TP) Compact Update – 12 November 2003
CAB700 – Tenant Participation (TP) Compact – Consultation Action Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report informs members on the progress made by the TP Compact Monitoring Group (TPCMG) in the review of the TP Compact.

Informs members of the outcomes and recommendations of the Consultation process.

Seeks members approval of the Tenant Participation Compact – Working Together. A Tenants Compact for Winchester, which has wherever possible been updated strengthened, and improved to reflect the outcomes and recommendations of the consultation process. (Appendix 1 refers)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That members approve the Tenant Participation Compact – Working Together. A Tenants Compact for Winchester set out in Appendix 1.

CABINET

3 March 2004

TENANT PARTICIPATION (TP) COMPACT REVIEW

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND HOUSING

DETAIL:

1 Introduction/What is a Compact?

- 1.1 Tenant Participation Compacts are locally negotiated agreements between the Council as landlord and its tenants and leaseholders, setting out how they can participate in decisions that affect their homes and community.
- 1.2 Winchester City Council's Compact covers the overall approach to tenant involvement in the Winchester District. It lays down expected standards, levels of service for working together and plans to increase the opportunities and options for involvement by encouraging both individual and collective participation.
- 1.3 Its overriding aim is to minimise barriers to involvement at all levels thereby benefiting tenants, leaseholders and the City Council.
- 1.4 The district-wide Tenant Participation Compact signed in September 2000 marked the beginning of a new partnership between tenants, elected members and officer.

2 The Review

- 2.1 The Tenant Participation Compact Monitoring Group (TPCMG), a group of 6 members of TACT, 3 elected members, (the Portfolio Holder for Housing, the Portfolio Holder for Performance Management, and the Chairman of Housing PIC), and the Tenant Participation Manager, was set up in February 2002 to monitor progress on the TP Compact. It identified the need to completely review, update and strengthen the document to reflect tenants' wishes.
- 2.2 The review process has taken many months to complete and has been carried out using examples of good practice from other Local Authorities, Compact briefing notes from TPAS (The Tenant Participation Advisory Service), and guidance notes produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).
- 2.3 In September 2003 (CAB700 Tenant Participation (TP) Compact – Consultation Action Plan refers), Cabinet authorised the TPCMGM and its membership, approved continuation of the group once the review was complete, and approved the consultation process.
- 2.4 In addition to 2.3 above it also gave delegated powers to the Director of Health & Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing to approve the Consultation document. The consultation document was agreed at a meeting between the Director of Health & Housing, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Tenant Participation Manager held on the 17 December 2003

- 2.5 It should be noted that the Compact is a working document and reviews will be carried out on an annual basis ensuring that the Compact remains relevant, up to date and reflects tenants wishes.

3 The Consultation

- 3.1 Consultation is an integral and essential part of the review process, and the TPCMG and TACT recognised the importance of 'getting it right' and reaching the widest possible audience

- 3.2 In November 2003 the TPCMG commissioned the expertise and experience of TPAS (The Tenant Participation Advisory Service) to assist with wider consultation with tenants and leaseholders. TPAS are a national organisation dedicated to tenant involvement and have considerable experience of advising on tenant involvement, consultation and support. The Council, TACT, Tenants Associations (TA's) and tenants have been members of TPAS since 1995. The consultants fees will be covered by the grant of £19,520 received from Central Government for implementing TP Compacts.

- 3.3 Using the Consultation plan approved by Cabinet, TPAS recommended the following approach:

- A Desk Top Review of the draft Compact to compare it with examples of good practice from other Local Authorities.
- A series of Focus Groups and One Day Workshops for TACT, TA's, elected members and staff to test the draft Compact.
- A Questionnaire based on the draft TP Compact sent to a random sample of 500 tenants and leaseholders.

- 3.4 The details of each of these methods, their findings and recommendations can be found below.

4 Desk Top Review

- 4.1 The desk top review was carried out by the TPAS Special Projects Manager.

- 4.2 Key findings of the review are as follows:

General Comments

- Well Written
- Excellent Partnership Working

The Best Bits

- Shows Achievements to date
- Range of Involvement opportunities
- TPCMG involved in reviewing complaints
- System for dealing with disputes

Recommendations

- Develop Performance Indicators
- Agree named mediators
- Make action plan more prominent
- Make links/references to other documents and sources of information

4.3 The full report can be found on WCC Intranet under Health and Housing, Tenant Participation and Tenant Participation Compact.

5 Focus Groups

5.1 Five focus groups to test the reviewed draft Tenant Participation Compact were set up consisting of the following groups of people:

- Officers from the Health & Housing Department – Housing Services
- Tenants randomly selected with no prior involvement in any tenant participation options
- Two groups from TACT and Tenants' Associations
- Elected members

5.2 The purpose of these focus groups was to:

- test new participation methods and targets in the new Compact
- measure satisfaction with existing methods of participation
- measure interest from those not already involved

5.3 It is interesting to note that none of the focus groups contained any surprising thoughts, insights or ideas that the TPCMG had not already considered. The full report on the findings and recommendations can be found on WCC Intranet under Health & Housing, Tenant Participation and Tenant Participation Compact. The information was considered in detail and where appropriate incorporated into the draft Compact.

6 The TP Compact Questionnaire

6.1 On advice from TPAS and the City Council's Research Section the TPCMG decided to use a random, representative sample of 500 tenants and leaseholders selected by area, dwelling type, gender, ethnicity and age from the Housing database, Orchard.

6.2 Each person selected was sent a copy of the questionnaire, together with a personal letter asking for their help with the Compact Review, a prepaid envelope for them to return their completed questionnaire, and an incentive – entry into a free draw to win £25 worth of gift vouchers of their choice. Recipients were assured that their responses would be treated in the strictest confidence and were given the option of filling in their name and address.

6.3 171 were completed - a return rate of 34.20%.

6.4 The results offered few surprises and included:

- 75% felt it was important that tenants are consulted on matters that affect their home
- 54% had not heard of the Winchester TP Compact
- 78% agreed that the Options for Involvement provided tenants with enough choices for getting involved
- 69% agreed that Tenants Associations should produce a welcome pack for new tenant in there area
- 59% knew that TACT had helped set up the Rents & Business Planning Forum

- 60% thought Tenants Associations should make plans for improving their local community which residents can contribute to
- 83% read the Council's newsletter Houseproud
- 78% thought it was very good or good
- 51% were not interested in becoming involved in the decision making about their estates and homes.

6.5 A copy of the questionnaire and the results can be found on the WCC Intranet under Health & Housing, Tenant Participation and Tenant Participation Compact.

7 Conclusions

7.1 The review of the TP Compact is now complete and the tenth draft of Working Together – A Tenants Compact for Winchester is included as Appendix 1.

7.2 It should be noted that the Desk Top Review highlighted the reviewed Compact as good, well written and contained evidence of excellent partnership working, stating that “only small simple things are missing that when included will make a huge difference”.

7.3 Taking this into account the following enhancements to the Compact have been made:

- More references and links to other documents and sources of information – evidence of this can be found throughout the document.
- Improved information in Equal Opportunities on page 10.
- The inclusion of performance indications in Section 7 - Standards for Monitoring Performance on page 15.
- A named mediator in Monitoring and Dealing with Complaints and Disputes on page 17.
- Amendments to the Action Plan on page 29.

7.4 In addition both the Desk Top Review and the Focus Groups highlighted the need to improve the appearance of the Compact and recommended that both the Compact and Tenant Participation needed to be promoted on a wider and more innovative way. Therefore the aim is to :

- Launch the Compact at the TACT AGM using a multi media approach.
- Produce two versions of the Compact - a full version and a summary - using colour, photographs, large print, plain English.
- Send the summary in a personally addressed envelope to all tenants and leaseholders district wide for inclusion in the Tenants Handbook.
- Send the full version to TACT, TA's, Officer and Elected Members and make it readily available to all tenants by placing copies in Reception.
- Obtain feedback on the finished document by producing a prepaid feedback form.
- Produce regular 'memory jogs' in Houseproud and ConTACT.

7.5 As stated in paragraph 6 above the TP Compact Questionnaire offered few surprises. However it did highlight the need to publicise the Compact more thoroughly and this has been addressed in 7.4 above. It also highlighted the need to improve publicity of TACT and TA's and this has been reflected in the Action Plan contained in Appendix 1.

8 TACT COMMENT

8.1 Both groups of TACT wish to acknowledge in this comment their appreciation or the diligence and hard work of:

- The Tenant Participation Compact Monitoring Group (TPCMG) who have striven for weeks and months to produce this professional Compact
- The expertise and guidance of our Tenant Participation Manager and Tenant Participation Officer
- The independent guidance and advice from the staff of TPAS

8.2 This comment could appear to lack detail, however we remind our Cabinet, TACT were provided with input and consultation throughout the numerous drafts of document.

8.3 The test of any document is that it achieves the purpose for which it was written. TACT require a Compact which evolves into a working reference document which will set the standard and improve tenant participation with Winchester City Council. TACT acknowledge their part in a desire to be willing participants in this process.

8.4 TACT seeks for Cabinet to endorse this Compact.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

9 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

9.1 Customer focus is a basic principle of the Corporate Strategy and is inextricably linked to Best Value and Continuous Performance Assessment (CPA)

10 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

10.1 Covered by the Tenant Participation Budget and the recent recruitment of a new Tenant Participation Officer.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

HO3003 – Tenant Participation Compacts – Department of the Environment and the Regions Consultation Paper 17 March 1999.

National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts published by the Department of Environment Transport and Regions (DETR) June 1999.

Working Together – A Tenants Compact for Winchester – A plain English version of the Compact produced by Housing Services and distributed to tenants and leaseholders district wide in November 2000.

Desk Top Review of Winchester City Council's Revised Tenant Participation Compact

Report from Tenant Compact Review Focus groups held for Winchester City Council
January/February 2004

Results of the Tenant Participation Compact Questionnaire

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Draft Tenant Participation Compact – Working Together – A Tenants Compact
for Winchester.