

Report to Cabinet

Item

Report of Deputy chief executive

16

Subject Revised tenant involvement framework for council housing

Purpose

To seek agreement to revise the tenant involvement framework for council housing to ensure the council meets the regulatory standards on tenant involvement and empowerment of the Localism Act 2011.

Recommendation

Cabinet to approve the framework for tenant involvement to ensure compliance with the revised regulatory standards on tenant involvement and empowerment (Localism Act 2011)

Corporate and service priorities

This report helps to meet the corporate priority to make Norwich a city with decent housing for all.

Financial implications

The housing service has a statutory duty to consult with tenants and there is an established tenant involvement budget in the HRA to meet the costs. The additional cost for the tenant training has been included in 2012/3 budget.

Ward/s: All

Cabinet member: Cllr Victoria MacDonald

Contact officers

Tracy John – Head of housing services 01603 212939

Anna Clarke– Tenancy Services Manager 01603 212038

Background documents

Scrutiny committee report – September 2012

The revised regulatory framework for social housing in England 2012

Report

Background

1. With effect from April 2012 the Homes and Communities agency (HCA) have taken on the regulatory powers for social housing. Social housing providers are no longer subject to inspections from the regulator and intervention will only be in the event of serious failures (financial failure or serious harm to tenants such as health and safety; loss of home, unlawful discrimination, loss of legal rights).
2. However, the HCA expects social landlords to meet the regulatory standards they have set. The regulations are split into economic (these are financial regulations which are not applicable to council retained stock) and consumer regulation.
3. Tenant involvement and empowerment is one of the four consumer standards under the consumer regulations. Whilst there is no prescriptive solution; the regulator expects social landlords to adopt a co-regulatory approach; where the landlord, the regulator and tenants together set, monitor and ensure standards are met. Social landlords will be expected to positively engage with tenants, incorporating tenant views and be transparent and accountable to tenants. Tenant involvement is expected to be through informal, formal and collective measures.

Tenant involvement at Norwich city council

4. Norwich city already has a strong tradition of a democratically accountable tenant involvement which is embedded in the housing Blueprint and through governance & the council committee structure. The revision of the tenant involvement framework aims to ensure continuous improvement in tenant involvement through co-regulation and partnership working and as part of as part of the corporate objectives for decent homes for all – putting tenants at the heart of everything we do.

The tenant involvement framework

Governance

5. Responsibility for the service delivery continues to lie with the council, but the council will be accountable to tenants for the customer facing standards. There will be greater emphasis on transparency through the tenant involvement framework ensuring tenants can influence service standards and hold the council to account by performance and value for money.
6. The core values of the tenant involvement framework are to
 - Work collaboratively
 - Broaden engagement with tenants and leaseholders

Increase emphasis on transparency and accountability to tenants & leaseholders

The tenants and the council will measure the success of the tenant involvement framework through the

Annual report to tenants

Key performance indicators & performance score cards

Tenant satisfaction

7. The principles of the Tenant involvement framework are to embed tenant involvement through

Building capacity with the tenants to actively engage, influence and monitor the housing service.

Increasing the opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to engage with the council, be it a one off matter, informal or formal

Strengthening the dedicated structure of consultation for non resident leaseholders, building on the current leaseholder and home ownership successful working relationship

Ensuring communication transparency and accountability from the panels through reports and publicising recommendations.

8. There will be three levels of tenant involvement in the tenant involvement framework

Local – neighbourhood/estate level events, focus groups, T&RAs and individuals

City-wide – through tenant panels

Strategic – annual review of council housing performance

9. At the Local level, the tenant involvement framework will ensure engagement at the neighbourhood/estate level, through tenant & resident groups (T&RAs) focus groups, talkback, patch panels, reader's panels, events and individual feedback.

10. At the City-wide level, the tenant involvement framework will monitor; scrutinise and continuously improve standards and service outcomes on behalf of all tenants across the city through the tenant panels and communicate outcomes through events, quarterly summits and activities. Each panel will be made up of six tenant representatives plus council officer support. The panel members will be subject to agreed terms of reference and code of conduct.

11. The Tenant Involvement panel (TIP) will have a housing policy focus. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) will have a service delivery focus and agree the tenant involvement annual work programme.

12. At the strategic level, the tenant involvement framework will have oversight of council housing; reviewing the annual report to tenants and housing work programme through the Annual review group (ARG).
13. The Annual review group will be made up of two representatives, one from each tenant panel plus the portfolio holder for housing and the shadow portfolio holders plus the Head of housing. The Annual review group (ARG) may receive reports from the Tenant Involvement panel (TIP) -which will have a housing policy focus and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) which will have a service delivery focus and endorse the tenant involvement annual work programme.

Transition of tenant involvement roles from current structure to the new framework.

Citywide board

14. The functions of the existing CityWide board sub-groups with a policy and financial focus (Constitution and Publications) would be assimilated into the TIP with those sub-groups dealing with performance (Performance, repairs and recharges) being handled by the TSP.

Talkback panel

15. The function of TalkBack focus groups providing profiled feedback would continue and will feed into the tenant involvement framework.

Tenant and resident associations (T&RAs)

16. T&RAs will continue to work within the framework and feed into informal, formal meetings, events and panels.

Leaseholders

17. Leaseholders will continue to work directly with the Home ownership unit and participate at a local level through T&RAs, as individuals and as members of task and finish groups. Non resident leaseholders will deal directly with the Home Ownership team through their own dedicated consultation structure to ensure leaseholder issues are properly and correctly considered and accounted for in line with Section 20 legislation.

Timescale

18. It is proposed to implement the structure for April 2013 and carry out a review of the framework within 12 months. It is also proposed that by March 2013, CWB and officers will agree terms of reference, composition, membership and work plans for the policy, performance panels and a local involvement menu, based on the housing improvement plan, the housing service plan, government legislation & HCA standards.

Skills and Training

19. Knowledgeable, confident tenants will be key to the success of the new structure therefore training is an essential commitment from the council. The housing service will commit to providing resources for the delivery of an on-going training academy (TTFN) to ensure capacity building and resilience of the tenant involvement framework.
20. A training programme has been developed with tenant representatives; procured and delivered to reps to test. Tenants have also worked with officers to procure a contract to lease lap tops for tenants to use, apply newly acquired skills, carry out research and produce their reports.
21. The aim of the training programme will be help more tenants improve their basic skills, which will help them influence how the housing service is delivered and the CWB constitution sub group has agreed the vision for the training programme as

“To obtain better life skills to help you (tenants) get into work and training and in order to have a say in how your housing services are run”
22. Tenants will be expected to complete the training programme to sit on the tenant panels and there will be a time limited period of 2 years for sitting on any panel.

Consultation to date

23. The following groups have been consulted as part of the review

CityWide Board

Sheltered Housing Tenant's Forum

Norwich Leaseholder's Association

Newly involved tenants

Corporate leadership team

Housing management team

Front line staff

Scrutiny committee

Stakeholder views

24. Tenants have been involved from the instigation of the tenant involvement review, including procurement of independent advisors, review of the initial findings of the review and follow up proposals and the next steps.
25. CWB have endorsed the proposals of a three level Tenant involvement structure to establish policy, performance panels and a separate structure for non resident leaseholders to meet the council's obligations under section 20.

26. NLA have reservations about the principle of splitting leaseholder representation into resident and non resident groups. However the majority of stakeholders accept the principle that non resident leaseholders should be involved via a specialist group outside of the tenant /resident structure. It should be noted there will be opportunities for non resident leaseholders be involved in task and finish groups which cover areas directly affecting issues in which they have a material interest e.g. property maintenance and community safety.

Benchmarking

27. Cambridge city council has been identified as best practice for their co-regulation structure, which has informed the tenant involvement framework.

Appendix A – current structure

Appendix B – proposed structure

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

The IIA should assess **the impact of the recommendation** being made by the report

Detailed guidance to help with completing the assessment can be found [here](#). Delete this row after completion

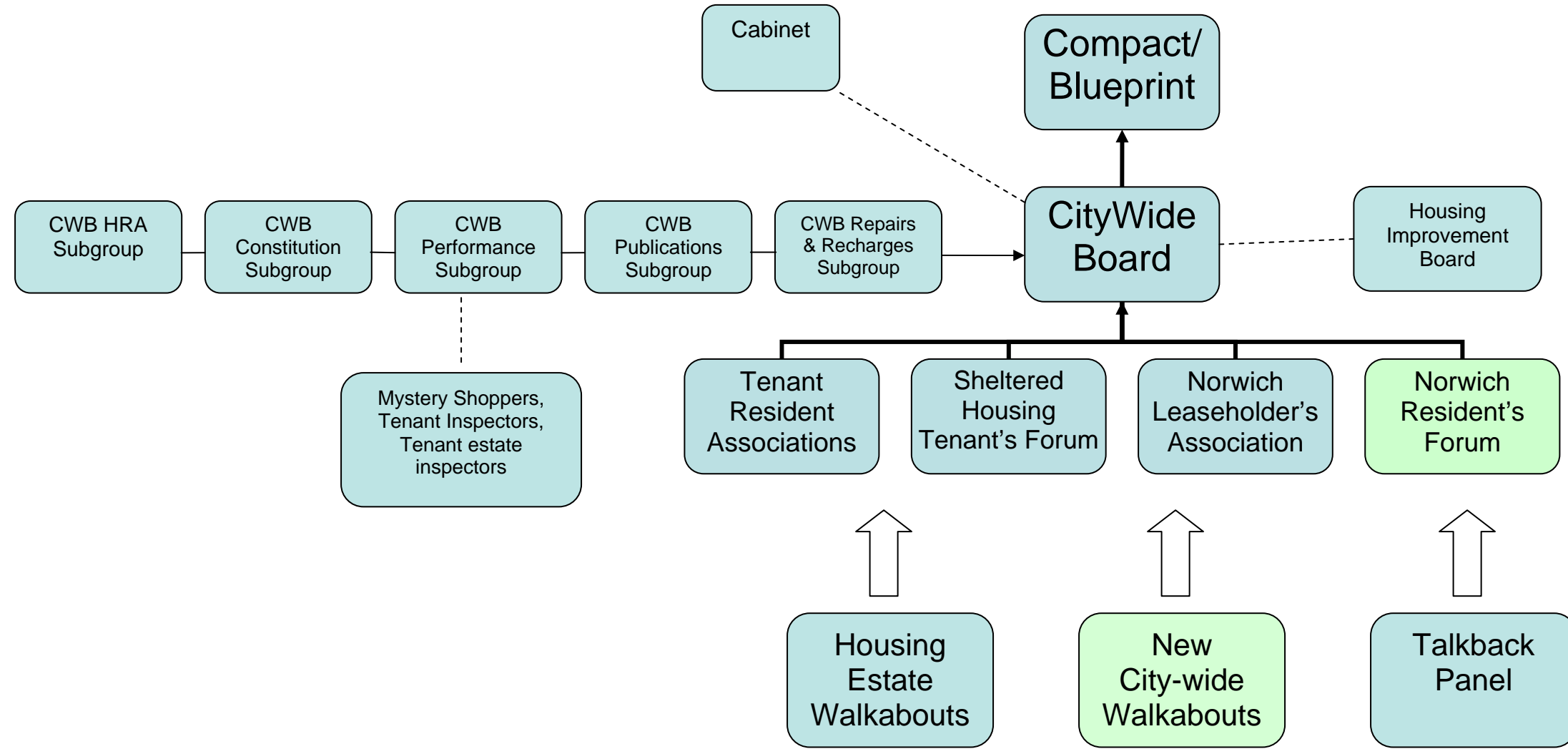
Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	19th November 2012
Head of service:	Tracy John
Report subject:	Revised tenant involvement framework for council housing
Date assessed:	
Description:	

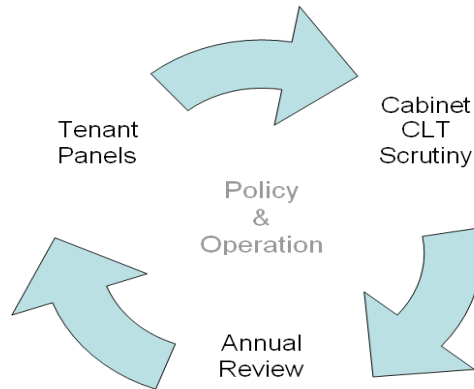
	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ICT services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Human Rights Act 1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health and well being	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Impact			
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Natural and built environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pollution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Energy and climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

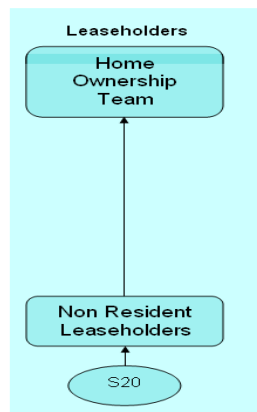
Recommendations from impact assessment
Positive
Negative
No impact
Issues



Tenant involvement Tenant scrutiny & co-regulation



Non resident Leaseholder involvement (section 20)



Local level involvement

