

Committee: Scrutiny

Agenda Item

Date: 11 June 2013

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**Title: Housing Tenants' Regulatory (Scrutiny)
Panel Update**

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Item for information

Summary

1. This report provides an overview of the background to the implementation of the Housing Tenants' Regulatory Panel, their responsibilities and current work plan.

Recommendations

2. For information only.

Financial Implications

3. Limited. Through Scrutiny reviews the Panel may identify and recommend process and cost efficiencies or propose investment opportunities within the Housing Service.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Localism Act (2011)

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	Tenant Regulatory Panel members were recruited through a consultation process. Regular updates on activities are given through the Housing News publication.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	All tenants were able to apply to become members of the panel. Interviews were conducted to select members. Equalities training will be given to all appointed members.
Health and Safety	None

Human Rights/Legal Implications	The Panel supports the self-regulation principles outlined in the Localism Act (2011).
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

6. Many stock retained authorities are currently introducing tenant led Regulatory (Scrutiny) Panels to support the self-regulation principles detailed in the Localism Act (2011). These panels support the idea of moving regulation away from a regulator in the spirit of localism.
7. Previously the Tenant Services Association (TSA) led on regulation type activities but since they were dissolved in 2012 the emphasis has been placed on local authorities and Housing Associations to implement equivalent activities at a local level.
8. The Housing Service have adopted the following principles for their Regulatory Panel:
 - The panel lead on 'bottom-up' self assessments
 - Scrutiny activity should be led by Tenants
 - Tenants and residents are able to hold landlords to account for their performance and behaviour
9. The UDC Housing Tenants Regulatory panel was recruited in November 2012. All tenants were invited to apply to become a member of the Panel and competency based interviews were conducted to select all members.
10. The panel consists of a Chairperson, 4 Analysts and 4 Inspectors. The analysts' role is to review process and procedural activities and analyse performance data, the inspectors' role is to conduct work and site inspections to ensure the Housing section provides an adequate level of customer service. As a collective, the Panel conduct formal service reviews to then formulate recommendations for consideration by both the Tenant Forum and the Housing Board.

All of the work and training for the Panel is completed voluntarily by panel members. The only payments made to them are reimbursements for travel and stationery costs.
11. The key aims of the Panel are:
 - To improve tenant satisfaction
 - To improve day-to-day services

- To help 'quality control' the work of the landlord
- To achieve the best Value for Money (VfM)
- To hold the landlord to account
- To help design service improvements for tenants

12. Scrutiny training has been given to the group in collaboration with Epping Forest DC who recruited their Tenant Panel at a similar time. The Panels are currently being supported by an independent consultant who has been working with them as they establish their groups and progress their first service reviews.

The Panel are also developing connections and working relationships with similar panels from other local authorities so that best practice and learning can be shared.

13. The Panel work as an independent body but are supported by the Housing Business & Performance Manager if required. Communications between the panel and relevant officers and the co-ordination of training and meetings is made through the Housing Business & Performance Manager.

Reports from the Panel will be reviewed and agreed by the Tenant Forum before being presented to the Housing Board for formal approval.

14. The Panel is currently reviewing the Voids (the time that a property is empty between re-lets) process.

Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That UDC are unable to recruit/retain Panel Members	2 – some risk or impact	Housing Scrutiny activities would be limited	Ensure the work of the panel is regularly communicated and that it emphasises the importance of the group
That Tenant Scrutiny work is not undertaken	2 – some risk or impact	The Housing Service would not be adopting some of the key principles of self-regulation	Panel fully supported by officers to ensure work is undertaken

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.