

TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' PANEL
30 April 2013

Lead Officer: Executive director of adult services, health and housing

Wards: All

Agenda Item: 11

Subject: - Review of Community Housing Panels

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 The Panel is asked to support the proposal to merge the existing six community housing panels into two panels.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 As a result of declining attendances at community housing panel (CHP) meetings and few outcomes arising from the meetings a review has taken place by the resident involvement group (RIG).

2.2 Following consultation with all the existing CHPs a proposal has been developed to merge the existing six panels into two with immediate effect.

2.3 It is felt that this proposal will provide a more effective and cost efficient way to engage residents regarding the delivery of housing management services in their area.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 CHPs were established in 2005 to enable residents to communicate with the council regarding the delivery of housing management services from their district housing office.

3.2 Initially there were 10 panels each covering approximately 3 electoral wards. They were chaired by residents but serviced by the council. They were usually attended by service managers, contractors and the Police and each met three times a year.

3.3 Although feedback from those attending the meetings has usually been positive attendances have been declining over the years (see appendix A). As a result some panels merged and two panels in the south of the borough were wound up resulting in only 6 panels meeting regularly. Attempts to increase attendance through increased publicity have not been successful.

- 3.4 As part of a wider review of the resident involvement framework, a programme of consultation took place in the early part of 2012, to establish views of residents regarding the future of the CHPs.
- 3.5 Following the initial consultation it was agreed that it was no longer realistic for the council to continue to support the six CHPs. Two options were therefore put to members of the CHPs during the last round of 2012/13 meetings. These options were: to disband the panel, or for the panel to continue to meet but to become self servicing – i.e. resident members carrying out the key administration functions.
- 3.6 In all cases, except one, the resident members voted to continue to meet and accept the need to service themselves eventually. However, during further discussion of the matter at a meeting of RIG, residents expressed their concern regarding the self servicing option. It was agreed that whilst residents appeared to be interested in servicing these panels, this was not a viable option as too few residents have the time, skills required or were willing to carry out the function.
- 3.7 In the circumstances RIG has proposed an alternative arrangement of two geographically based panels carrying out a similar function to the existing panels but each meeting 4 times a year.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1 The two panels would cover areas of roughly equal size in terms of property numbers and as far as possible; reflect the new areas used for the purposes of housing management. The two panels would therefore cover the ward areas as follows;

North Borough Panel* 7558 properties
 Addiscombe, Ashburton, Bensham Manor, Broad Green, Norbury, Selhurst, Shrublands, South Norwood, Thornton Heath, Upper Norwood, West Thornton, Woodside

South Borough Panel* 6452 properties
 Ballards, Croham, Coulsdon East and West, Fairfield, Fieldway, Kenley, Monks Hill, New Addington, Purley, Sanderstead, Selsdon, Waddon

*Names only for the purpose of this report.

- 4.2 Meetings will be 'public' and therefore open to anyone but attendance is aimed at council tenants and leaseholders, or those who pay a service charge to the council from the area relevant to each panel. Only council tenants & leaseholders and those who pay a service charge would be eligible to join the panel and would have to do so in writing annually. All members would also have to register their details via the Housing Sounding Board.
- 4.3 Meetings of each panel will be arranged four times a year and for the time being, these will initially take place in the evening but once they are

established, members may decide that a daytime meeting would be more suitable.

- 4.4 Similarly, meetings of both panels would initially be held in a central Croydon location but members of the panels can discuss the option to hold meetings in venues more local to the areas they represent, if they wish.
- 4.5 The resident involvement team would service the meetings and would be responsible for all the tasks associated with organising the meetings, such as: agenda setting, room booking, inviting officers / guest speakers and following up action plans. A resident involvement officer would also attend to support the Chair and ensure that residents observe the code of conduct, in addition to promoting resident involvement amongst panel members.
- 4.6 The proposed constitution for the panel is attached as appendix B.
- 4.7 As there is a review of the membership of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel due later this year, existing CHP representatives to this Panel will continue in their role until the review has been completed.
- 4.8 It is proposed that 30 minute, pre meeting surgeries will form part of each meeting, where residents can speak with officers on a one to one basis about personal issues. However, it is unclear if pre meeting surgeries would be effective or popular at meetings such as those being proposed, where a large geographic area is covered. It may be found that residents will not travel out of their local area to raise issues at such a pre meeting surgery. Therefore these surgeries will take place for the time being but will be subject to a review after two full rounds of meetings.
- 4.9 In an effort to attract more residents to become involved and be members of these new panels they will be launched with a new name and branding. Suggested names to date include Housing Services Panels/Groups and Area Housing Services Forum. Other suggestions or comments on the name from Panel members are welcomed.

Report Author: Tim Nash, Resident involvement and scrutiny co-ordinator, Ext. 62954