

# **Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee**

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**Thursday 25 September 2014 at 2.00 pm**

**To be held at the Town Hall, Pinstone  
Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH**

**The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend**

## **Membership**

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Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Steve Ayris (Deputy Chair), David Barker, Simon Clement-Jones, Sheila Constance, Richard Crowther, George Lindars-Hammond, Roy Munn, Josie Paszek, Sioned-Mair Richards, Lynn Rooney, Richard Shaw and Sarah Jane Smalley

## **Substitute Members**

In accordance with the Constitution, Substitute Members may be provided for the above Committee Members as and when required.

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## **PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING**

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The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee exercises an overview and scrutiny function in respect of the planning, development and monitoring of performance and delivery of services which aim to make Sheffield a safer, stronger and more sustainable city for all of its residents.

A copy of the agenda and reports is available on the Council's website at [www.sheffield.gov.uk](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk). You can also see the reports to be discussed at the meeting if you call at the First Point Reception, Town Hall, Pinstone Street entrance. The Reception is open between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm, Monday to Thursday and between 9.00 am and 4.45 pm. on Friday. You may not be allowed to see some reports because they contain confidential information. These items are usually marked \* on the agenda.

Members of the public have the right to ask questions or submit petitions to Scrutiny Committee meetings and recording is allowed under the direction of the Chair. Please see the website or contact Democratic Services for further information regarding public questions and petitions and details of the Council's protocol on audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings.

Scrutiny Committee meetings are normally open to the public but sometimes the Committee may have to discuss an item in private. If this happens, you will be asked to leave. Any private items are normally left until last. If you would like to attend the meeting please report to the First Point Reception desk where you will be directed to the meeting room.

If you require any further information about this Scrutiny Committee, please contact Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer, on 0114 2735065 or email [matthew.borland@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.borland@sheffield.gov.uk).

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## **FACILITIES**

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There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall. Induction loop facilities are available in meeting rooms.

Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

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**SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY AND POLICY  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AGENDA  
25 SEPTEMBER 2014**

**Order of Business**

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- 1. Welcome and Housekeeping Arrangements**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Exclusion of Public and Press**  
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public
- 4. Declarations of Interest**  
Members to declare any interests they have in the business to be considered at the meeting
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting**  
To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 31 July 2014
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**  
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public
- 7. Challenge for Change - Community Engagement**  
Report of the Challenge for Change Tenant Scrutiny Group
- 8. The Housing + Model and its Implementation**  
Report of the Interim Director, Housing and Neighbourhoods Service
- 9. South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel**  
Report of the Policy and Improvement Officer
- 10. Work Programme 2014/15**  
Report of the Policy and Improvement Officer
- 11. Welfare Reform - September 2014 Update**  
Briefing Note For Information
- 12. Right to Buy Update - September 2014**  
Briefing Note for Information
- 13. Date of Next Meeting**  
The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday 27 November 2014 at 2.00pm in the Town Hall

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## ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

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If you are present at a meeting of the Council, of its executive or any committee of the executive, or of any committee, sub-committee, joint committee, or joint sub-committee of the authority, and you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI)** relating to any business that will be considered at the meeting, you must not:

- participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the meeting, participate further in any discussion of the business, or
- participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

These prohibitions apply to any form of participation, including speaking as a member of the public.

You **must**:

- leave the room (in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct)
- make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any DPI at any meeting at which you are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.
- declare it to the meeting and notify the Council's Monitoring Officer within 28 days, if the DPI is not already registered.

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your **disclosable pecuniary interests** under the new national rules. You have a pecuniary interest if you, or your spouse or civil partner, have a pecuniary interest.

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner undertakes.
- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period\* in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

\*The relevant period is the 12 months ending on the day when you tell the Monitoring Officer about your disclosable pecuniary interests.

- Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority –
  - under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
  - which has not been fully discharged.

- Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.
- Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.
- Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) –
  - the landlord is your council or authority; and
  - the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.
- Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -
  - (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and
  - (b) either -
    - the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
    - if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

If you attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered and you are aware that you have a **personal interest** in the matter which does not amount to a DPI, you must make verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. You should leave the room if your continued presence is incompatible with the 7 Principles of Public Life (selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership).

You have a personal interest where –

- a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing (including interests in land and easements over land) of you or a member of your family or a person or an organisation with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the Authority's administrative area, or
- it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests that are defined as DPIs but are in respect of a member of your family (other than a partner) or a person with whom you have a close association.

Guidance on declarations of interest, incorporating regulations published by the Government in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, has been circulated to you previously.

You should identify any potential interest you may have relating to business to be considered at the meeting. This will help you and anyone that you ask for advice to fully consider all the circumstances before deciding what action you should take.

In certain circumstances the Council may grant a **dispensation** to permit a Member to take part in the business of the Authority even if the member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest relating to that business.

To obtain a dispensation, you must write to the Monitoring Officer at least 48 hours before the meeting in question, explaining why a dispensation is sought and desirable, and specifying the period of time for which it is sought. The Monitoring Officer may consult with the Independent Person or the Council's Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from Gillian Duckworth, Interim Director of Legal and Governance on 0114 2734018 or email [gillian.duckworth@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:gillian.duckworth@sheffield.gov.uk).

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**Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee**

**Meeting held 31 July 2014**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Steve Ayris (Deputy Chair), David Barker, Simon Clement-Jones, Sheila Constance, Richard Crowther, Roy Munn, Josie Paszek, Sioned-Mair Richards, Richard Shaw and Sarah Jane Smalley

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors George Lindars-Hammond and Lynn Rooney. There were no nominated substitutes.

**2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014, were approved as a correct record and, arising from their consideration, it was noted that Councillors Sheila Constance and Sioned-Mair Richards had attended the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, and this had proved to be a very useful meeting. It was also noted that each of the authorities in South Yorkshire had agreed to share their Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes relating to community safety issues and that domestic violence was a possible item for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

4.2 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2014, were approved as a correct record.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 Written responses would be provided to the public questions received regarding the Sheffield First Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership, Crime and Disorder Committees and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's Public Consultation on New Police Inspections and these responses would be circulated to Committee Members.

**6. THE IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM ON SHEFFIELD'S RESIDENTS - UPDATE JULY 2014**

- 6.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Policy, Performance and Communications, which provided an update on the impact of welfare reform on Sheffield's residents and how the Council and others were responding.
- 6.2 In attendance for this item were Nicola Rees, Policy and Improvement Officer, and Maxine Stavrianakos, Income Management Unit.
- 6.3 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-
- Council tenants wishing to downsize as a result of the Under-Occupancy Provisions (Bedroom Tax) would be given priority, whilst tenants in arrears would not be evicted as long as they were making some attempts at payment. In addition, tenants would be allowed to move house even if they were in arrears.
  - In relation to the Benefit Cap, the number of children in affected households averaged at 5/6 per household. This was because there weren't many families in Sheffield affected by the Benefit Cap and those that were affected were likely to be families with a greater number of children, who were therefore living in larger properties, with higher housing costs.
  - The cost of the research by the Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research (CRESR) was £15,000 and officers would provide a written response regarding the associated cost/benefit analysis.
  - Approval had been given to use the 2013/14 Council Tax Hardship Scheme underspend during 2014/15, but only for amounts owing during 2013/14. It was highly likely that this money would be used to assist customers who ran up debt in 2013/14 and who were now at a stage when referral to an external collection agency was the next course of action. Officers would provide a written response regarding the Local Assistance Scheme underspend.
  - Officers would provide a written response with regard to general Council Tax arrears.
  - Since April 2013, 459 Council tenants had been awarded a rehousing priority to move to a smaller property, of which 363 had stated that this was due to the impact of welfare reforms. However, the majority of Council tenants did not want to move and were opting to stay and pay.
  - A tenant who had received a Discretionary Housing Payment would be included in the relevant 'Paid in Full' section of the 'Payment Towards Under-Occupancy Cut in Benefit' pie chart in the report.
  - Officers would provide a written response regarding the numbers of tenants who were over-occupying.

- Officers would supply written details of Council tenant rent arrears by Ward and details of households affected by the Benefit Cap by Ward.
- No Council Housing Service tenants had been forced to move into a smaller property and become overcrowded because of the Benefit Cap. Officers would check to see if this information was available for private tenants and those in Registered Social Landlord properties.
- At the present time, no one had been evicted under the Under-Occupancy Provisions. In relation to general evictions, there had been 390 in the past year, but this high figure was partially explained by the inclusion of water rates in Council rents, so that sometimes evictions would take place on the basis of unpaid water rates alone. The Council did not offer introductory tenancies and there were increases in the numbers of tenants aged up to 29 years who weren't paying anything. It was the practice of local judges to give immediate possession, but suspended possession orders were likely to be given if the tenant was engaging with the Council. In comparison with other large housing organisations, the Council gave more support to tenants in arrears and also worked closely with the Courts to adopt best practice. Rent arrears caused by the welfare reform changes were currently estimated by the Council Housing Service to spike at £29 million by 2019/20. The numbers of people who were evicted and then got rehoused, sometimes privately, were difficult to track, but officers would try to obtain information on this.
- Whilst officers were aware of other spending cuts which were affecting communities, such as reductions in funding for teaching English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) provision, they were not aware of any specific analysis of the cumulative impacts on individuals of wider cuts within communities, over and above benefits cuts. However, the close links which the Council had with Sheffield Citizens' Advice did assist in building up a wider picture about other issues, such as ESOL cuts, which were affecting communities.
- The CRESR report had been commissioned to give the Council as thorough a picture of the cumulative impacts of the welfare reforms as possible. In terms of what would be done with the subsequent report, the Welfare Reform Implementation Group had a work stream entitled Strategic Policy and Direction and it was hoped that the subsequent report would provide the information to enable recommendations to be made as to future direction. It should also be borne in mind that things may change as a result of the forthcoming General Election.
- The CRESR researchers would address the issue of possible offsetting of increases in employment in their report, and officers would ask if it would be possible to also include within the report some reference to changes in personal tax allowances.

6.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Nicola Rees and Maxine Stavrianakos for their contribution to the

meeting;

- (b) notes the contents of the report and responses to questions;
- (c) accepts the officer responses regarding the adoption of the aspects of best practice operating in Bristol and Manchester; and
- (d) requests that:-
  - (i) officers continue to look at best practice and highlight this in any future reports to it;
  - (ii) officers provide their written responses to Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer, for circulation to Committee Members;
  - (iii) the report be circulated to all Council Members and Sheffield Members of Parliament for them to note and respond to if they so wish;
  - (iv) a letter be sent to the appropriate Government Minister concerning the end of the Government grant to Local Authorities to provide a Local Assistance Scheme in March 2015, with a request for a response;
  - (v) Members wishing to take up the offer to visit the Rents Team contact Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer; and
  - (vi) a further report on the Impact of Welfare Reform on Sheffield's Residents, be presented to the Committee in six months' time.

## **7. COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING**

- 7.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Communities, and the Executive Director, Place, which provided the Committee with information on the delivery of new/additional Council homes, through either acquisition or new build, which was one of the top priorities for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.
- 7.2 In attendance for this item were Liam Duggan, HRA Business Plan Team Manager, Dave Mason, Housing and Regeneration, and Christine Rose, Regeneration Manager.
- 7.3 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-
  - The Sheffield Strategic Housing Market Assessment showed that 725 additional affordable properties were needed every year. This took account of the newly forming households in the City.
  - Initially, around 600 new/additional units were forecast in the coming six years, but officers were looking at ways of expanding that figure. New building was limited by the amount of land available, with only a handful of

larger HRA sites being left.

- The 600 increase was a gross figure and did not take into account the impact of continued Right To Buy (RTB) sales.
- The projected new build and acquisitions for Council housing was a minimum of 600 over six years, with the RTB forecast being around 250 sales per year over the next three years.
- If new Council houses were built they could be sold under RTB, but for the first 15 years there was some protection to the Council via the cost floor rule. This prevented new homes being sold for less than the cost of building/acquiring them.
- RTB should be viewed as a risk but one that has been factored into the business plan.
- Information was received from the Council Housing Service on the demand for properties and the new build project was seeking to address the gaps identified in local provision. The data also informed future acquisitions.
- The projected Phase One New Build timetable of 18 months, as set out in the report, was about what would be expected for schemes of this size. It was important to note that some parts of this work wouldn't have to be repeated for future phases.
- One of the risks to the Council Housing New Build project was that building materials were becoming more expensive.
- Phase Two of the New Build project was proposed to comprise mostly family homes.
- The Council had acquired some properties from the Sheffield Housing Company (SHC) but the SHC's primary purpose was to build and sell homes at market value. It was considered that the market was starting to pick up for SHC. 60 hectares of HRA land had been earmarked for the SHC.
- Lower value HRA sites were being used for new Council housing, where the new schemes could have a regeneration impact.
- One of the remaining large HRA sites, Adlington in Parson Cross, was being considered for an Extra Care facility for older people. It was hoped that this would free up homes for families.
- The aim of the Housing Delivery Investment Plan was to increase the rate of housing delivery and to have a plan for which sites would be delivered through which route, including new Council housing.

7.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Liam Duggan, Dave Mason and Christine Rose for their contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the report and responses to questions;
- (c) recommends that any Housing Revenue Account land should be prioritised for building Council properties, subject to the Council having sufficient funding; and
- (d) requests officers to explore the use of covenants to protect properties from Right to Buy.

## **8. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15**

8.1 The Committee received a report of Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer, which set out potential topics for the Committee to consider for the 2014/15 Work Programme.

8.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) approves the Work Programme as detailed in the report, subject to the Challenge for Change item on grass cutting being included on the agenda for the Committee meeting to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014; and
- (b) requests that:-
  - (i) the item scheduled for the Committee's January 2015 meeting on the Private Rented Sector includes reference to the changing nature of that sector;
  - (ii) the report on Domestic Violence to be considered at the Committee's November 2014 meeting includes an ethnic group breakdown; and
  - (iii) any Committee Members wishing to join the proposed Task Group, set up by the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, on "House Building and the Local Economy", contact Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer.

## **9. RIGHT TO BUY UPDATE JULY 2014**

9.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the July 2014 Right to Buy Update report.

## **10. REVIEW OF THE PARTNER RESOURCE ALLOCATION MEETING (PRAM)**

10.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the report on the Review of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM) and agrees that Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer, would pass on Member comments regarding the report's incomprehensibility and lack of clarity, particularly for new

Members.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 11.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014, at 2.00 pm in the Town Hall.

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## Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014

**Report of:** Challenge for Change Tenant Scrutiny Group

**Subject:** Challenge for Change: Community Engagement Report

**Author of Report:** Challenge for Change Tenant Scrutiny Group

**Summary:**

The customer scrutiny panel known as Challenge for Change (C4C) was set up in 2011 to perform an independent review of services delivered by the Council Housing Service (formerly Sheffield Homes). This report covers the group's project on Community Engagement. The purpose of the project was to investigate how people get involved as volunteers with the Council Housing Service, who gets involved and if there are barriers or obstacles that prevent different groups of people from getting involved.

The Group's report, including findings and recommendations is attached.

The report has been presented to the Interim Sheffield Council Housing Board and the Council Housing Services "City Wide Forum" (a meeting for all council tenants in the city). Managers responsible for the Housing Services Communications and Community Engagement Services will report back to the C4C group on their progress in implementing the recommendations.

**Type of item:** The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	<b>X</b>
Informing the development of new policy	<b>X</b>
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

Support the recommendations made in Challenge for Change Community Engagement Report

**Background Papers:**

List any background documents (e.g. research studies, reports) used to write the report. Remember that by listing documents people could request a copy.

**Category of Report:** OPEN/



# Challenge for Change

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*Scrutiny Report* Community Engagement







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## 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Following approval from the Board of the Council Housing Service, a customer scrutiny panel was established. Recruitment was open to tenants, leaseholders and customers of the Council Housing Service. The Community Engagement team, with independent support and advice from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), successfully recruited a team of scrutinisers.
- 1.2 It was decided to call the group Challenge for Change. Throughout this report, the scrutiny group will be called C4C.
- 1.3 The initiation of the project during Summer 2013 was completed by four main scrutinisers; Linda Moxon, Ian Alexander, Michelle Cook and Tony Merrygold. One other, Richard Bailey, was also involved in the project in the early stages.
- 1.4 Following feedback from the City Wide Forum the C4C scrutinisers elected to focus on Community Engagement. At the forum other topic suggestions were put forward to the group for scrutiny. However, due to C4C having only five volunteers at the time, it was decided that more volunteers would be required for those particular topics and after discussion at a group meeting it was decided that Community Engagement would be the group's next project.
- 1.5 C4C considered many factors in its decision to scrutinise the Community Engagement services of Sheffield City Council's Housing Service. It had a clear remit to identify if they could develop recommendations to improve the involvement levels of Community Engagement amongst all service user groups especially those who are under-represented in groups and forums.
- 1.6 In this report, C4C have detailed the findings following its investigations. C4C have spoken to area managers, assistant managers and support staff from within Sheffield Council Housing.
- 1.7 C4C have additionally spoken to tenants and residents to gather their views and opinions on where Community Engagement could be improved.
- 1.8 C4C reviewed the Council Housing website and relevant leaflets to analyse whether the service is working well and providing good value for money for all customers.
- 1.9 C4C have made several recommendations based on its findings, which can be found at the end of this document.
- 1.10 The overall purpose of the project was to examine the Community Engagement service and ensure that tenants, residents and TARAs are receiving a quality service, delivering on its promises and providing Sheffield Council Housing with value for money.

## 2. Objectives

2.1 From C4C's initial research into Community Engagement, it identified the following objectives for this project.

- To understand the recruitment policy for getting involved. Are there different criteria for different types of involvement? What are the obstacles/barriers/failures?
- To understand how tenants learn/find out about getting involved
- To determine whether publicity is effective and fit for purpose
- To understand what the benefits are to individuals of becoming involved
- To understand why people do get involved
- To understand and explore the “volunteer journey”
- To understand the reasons why people stop being involved – is it clear what involvement entails?
- To understand how the performance and effectiveness of involvement is measured
- To understand if innovation and new technology is being used to enable involvement
- To understand how much involvement people actually want
- To find out if “virtual” forums are in existence/planned. Do they work? Is the ETara used?
- To understand the level of TARA involvement



## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Overview from the Community Engagement team and an Assistant Manager in an Area Team

3.1.1 What is Community Engagement?

3.1.2 We had a discussion with staff from the Community Engagement team and the North West housing area team to learn what Community Engagement is all about.

3.1.3 Community Engagement can be several different things – another phrase that is often used is “getting involved”. So what does “getting involved” mean? It is all about having your say to make a difference to services you receive and the communities you live in.

3.1.4 How you do this is up to you and what your landlord offers. Different methods of getting involved were explained which include –

- Tenant and Resident Associations (TARAs)
- Partnership Groups
- Governance
- Future of Council Housing Project’s Service Design Groups

3.1.5 Community Engagement is publicised in The Bridge, a magazine that goes out to all TARAs, as well as In Touch which goes out to all tenants.

3.1.6 We found that there are three main reasons why people get involved –

- To make a difference
- To meet new people and share experiences
- To try to improve the service

3.1.7 People can also become Tenant Inspectors.

3.1.8 North West is a typical area where there are 10 active and well supported TARAs. The TARAs meet as a group bi monthly with the Tenant Liaison Officers (TLOs). They are also involved in participatory budgeting, helping to decide how some of the areas resources are allocated.

### 3.2 Tenant Surveys

3.2.1 As part of C4C’s investigations, a questionnaire was devised which was used to gather and collate responses from Tenants and Residents.



3.2.2 From the evidence gathered from the tenants it was clear that the majority were not aware of Community Engagement services within Sheffield Council Housing or the opportunities to get involved as volunteers.

3.2.3 20 people were interviewed in different locations of the city. From the results of the survey 83% of those interviewed stated that they had no involvement as a volunteer. The survey results additionally identified that 58% were not aware of opportunities to get involved, and 28% had some awareness.

3.2.4 From the responses it interestingly identified that 78% of those surveyed would not be interested in volunteering opportunities with the Council Housing Service if they were aware of them.

3.2.5 C4C discovered from the survey and conversations with tenant that the lack of volunteers was generally down to a feeling of apathy and a lack of communication from Community Engagement regarding the opportunities available to the wider community.

3.2.6 See also Appendix 4.

### 3.3 TARA Survey

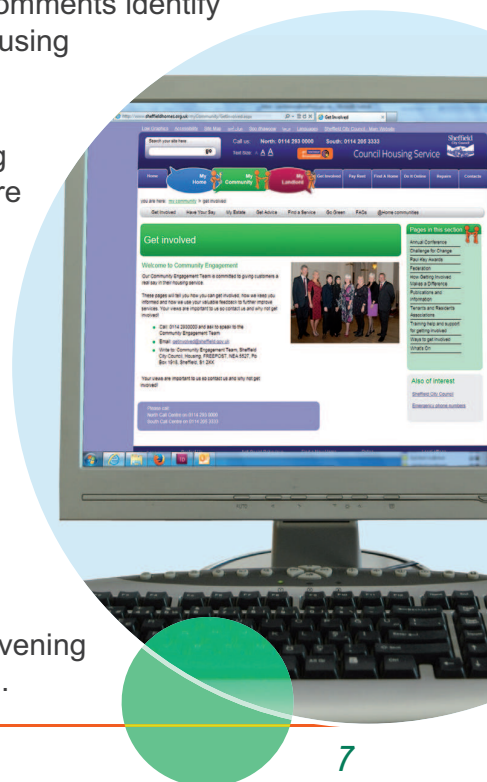
3.3.1 C4C conducted a survey with all TARAs throughout the city to gather evidence of the way the Council Housing Service involves customers in Community Engagement. 14 out of 63 replied - a response rate of 22%. The majority of the replies received reported that the service level from Community Engagement was generally favourable.

3.3.2 Of those that responded, 57% considered that they are aware of the support the Council Housing Service provides for their TARA. The comments identify that the TLO service is a very helpful service and the housing service provides a good level of support when required.

3.3.3 There were a few comments to suggest that the Housing Service was offering minimal/no support and TARAs were not satisfied.

3.3.4 There were a range of views of how tenants and residents could become more involved in Community Engagement. These ranged from:

- Having events as well as regular meetings
- Wider advertising of volunteering opportunities
- TARAs promoting a friendly, welcoming and more enthusiastic approach
- Provide a varied meeting time schedule, e.g. have evening meetings for people who work or have commitments.



3.3.5 The survey respondents suggested several approaches the Council Housing Service could consider in order to encourage more people to be involved in opportunities. Below is a summary of the comments.

- Be less obstructive and support new and inventive ways
- More advertising
- Hold roadshows around each estate and inform levy payers what people do
- Provide details of tenant's email addresses

3.3.6 The survey identified that several of the TARAs consider that they have limited impact on the Council Housing Service both within their area and city. Comments ranged from:

- We can talk all we like but the council do what they want
- None – The council do as they wish and ignore debate
- We have more of an impact within our local area as this is what concerns people

3.3.7 There were some positive comments of TARAs having an impact with Community Engagement through the Council Housing Service:

- Our TARA has a good impact with community groups like kids clubs and we have a voice that gets listened to at City Wide Forum and partnership groups
- We provide a channel for information and hope to influence policy

3.3.8 See also Appendix 3

## 3.4 Community Engagement Team

3.4.1 C4C interviewed the manager of Community Engagement and another member of the team to find out what the purpose of Community Engagement is, and specifically to identify what the role of their team is.

3.4.2 They described their role, which includes:

- Maintaining a database of volunteers
- Acting as a link between volunteers and TARAs
- To assist TLOs dependent on the complexity of TARA issues
- Manage the City Wide Forum, Community Engagement Partnership Group and the Annual Tenant Conference

3.4.3 They explained that information is given out to new tenants when they sign up about TARAs and volunteering. It was felt that there could be more opportunities for TARAs to become involved with new tenants.



3.4.4 They believe there is also a role for TARAs to be active in recruitment in their local areas.

3.4.5 They told us that they have had some success using volunteers in specialist subjects through Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS), who have worked with a few TARAs.

3.4.6 It was explained the Housing+ role could potentially encourage more tenants to become involved in their local community.

### **3.5 Assistant Director**

3.5.1 C4C interviewed an Assistant Director to ask questions on how he sees the role which Sheffield Housing Service plays in engaging tenants, leaseholders and customers to being involved in Community Engagement.

The key points are summarised:

3.5.2 Community Engagement is all about information giving, scrutiny and seeking ideas. All encompassing a differing level of interaction, ranging from taking surveys (500 people every quarter), to investigating how open and transparent a group are performing, and also seeking tenant's views and ideas for future projects.

3.5.3 There seems to be too much information gathered from existing partnership groups. This is in the main due to the fact that several of the group's tend to have the same individuals attending which leads to the same views being aired.

3.5.4 A very small cross section of tenants are involved with Community Engagement. There needs to be a fairer way to ensure a better representation in all areas. The Council Housing Service should endeavour to visit or communicate with every tenant to discuss ways to get involved.

3.5.5 It appears that certain groups are not interested in actively engaging in volunteering opportunities; the Council Housing Service needs to understand what would get them involved.

- It needs to undertake more targeted advertising ie. to encourage participation
- Reaching out to under-represented groups, especially the teenagers and early 20s through social media channels eg Facebook, Twitter etc. as an alternative to attending meetings and offer an opportunity for them to get involved and engaging with their community services.
- There needs to be a higher visibility of engagement teams on the streets, speaking to the public that are missed by the TARAs.
- A more tailored approach to attracting more BME participants. Speak to BME volunteers who are already involved to gain insights as to the best approach and ideas to the best way forward for encouraging participation.

3.5.6 The Housing Service needs to improve its recruitment strategy to get more people involved. More access is required for information on all residents. The apprentices need to be on the estates where residents see them and lead by example.

3.5.7 A massive recruitment drive is needed, for new faces, Job Centres and colleges could be more involved in people doing voluntary work to enhance their job opportunities.

### **3.6 Tenant Liaison Officers (TLO's)**

3.6.1 C4C held a meeting with TLOs to get an understanding of their role working with TARA's.

They outlined a summary of their role:

- As a link between different areas and the council to help to form new TARAs
- To help TARAs understand and implement the recognition policy
- To be the eyes & ears between the community and the Council
- We help & advise with funding, newsletters and setting up new projects.

3.6.2 The TLOs outlined that they try to attend meetings with tenants as often as possible but because of working schedules they may not be seen around as much during the normal working day. More contact is now made via phone/email.

3.6.3 The TLOs commented that they aim to ensure customers sustain long term viability, by early intervention when needed, also ensuring a quick turnaround is implemented when needed.

3.6.4 The TLOs try to involve local church groups and also work closely with schools, colleges, junior wardens etc. They endeavour to engage the public in social activities, and try to change the public's perception of Community Engagement.

### **3.7 Senior Manager within Communities at Sheffield Council**

3.7.1 C4C asked how will the introduction of Housing+ work towards improving Community Engagement?

3.7.2 The council want to use a new language referring to service users instead of just TARAs. It would give a strong commitment to improving tenants' say on the services they receive.

3.7.3 Housing+ also holds opportunities for the future, for more individual tenants to be involved, and a stronger voice for people and neighbourhoods who are not heard. All the ideas came from the people involved within the Future of Council Housing Groups.

- 3.7.4 There is a lot of work to be done, particularly around further consultation. Historically, there is a culture of a lack of trust - a 'them and us attitude'. Community Engagement does happen in housing, however it is done in isolation concentrating on the TARAs.
- 3.7.5 Council cuts in the Housing Service will have an impact and there will be fewer services in the wider community. We will look at what people can do for themselves. All tenants are customers of other council services, all resources/ services/groups must work together better than they do now. It is a change in culture.
- 3.7.6 Some good work has been done. We are genuinely trying to improve. The success of C4C is some proof of this.
- 3.7.7 Sheffield Housing Service, needs to move away from the TARA centric view; the whole power structure may need review.
- 3.7.8 Important role for a federation could be the best change in decades if done properly with people with capacity to run it. Would like to make more use of local housing forums and for them to be more tenant led.

### **3.8 Area Managers**

- 3.8.1 C4C conducted an interview with Area Managers within the Council.
- 3.8.2 Community Engagement is a high priority and Sheffield Housing Service has dedicated 1.5 TLOs per area. The council believe the TLOs have enough knowledge and awareness about what is happening regarding issues in the wider area.
- 3.8.3 The TLOs do not receive specialised training as outside expertise is brought in to address particular issues e.g. ASB. They support the TARAs, with intensive management i.e. chairing or minuting meetings, general admin etc. This is not ideal and the council would like to see their role further developed and for TARAs to be more independent.
- 3.8.4 The council would welcome wider engagement within the city although it varies massively from community to community, and would welcome further investigation into this.
- 3.8.5 The council would welcome a more tenant led approach although it does seem to be the same groups of people who tend to be consulted.
- 3.8.6 Since the service development groups/and It's Your Shout, in the SE and NW, and other areas they are seeing an increase in attendance and willingness to chair the meetings.

3.8.7 We welcome TARAs putting area issues or welfare benefits information in their newsletter and greater use of the Council Housing Service website and social media for local issues, this could be more flexible and user friendly.

### **3.9 Communication**

3.9.1 C4C met with the Assistant Manager from the Communications team to find out what their role is in Community Engagement.

3.9.2 It was explained that there were two main strands to communications activity – promotion campaigns and listening to customers.

3.9.3 There is a “virtual” Communications Partnership Group, with approximately 20 people replying to each topic.

3.9.4 C4C found that although there had been improvements to the Council Housing Service website, there were aspects of the “getting involved” section that need looking at. For example, keeping the content up to date, using fewer lists and making it more engaging with greater use of visual material.

3.9.5 C4C learned that the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter is limited, and that the emphasis seems to be on providing information on activity such as evictions rather than focus on how people can get involved.

## **4. Budget Review for the Project**

C4C were allocated a budget for the duration of the scrutiny project. The money was used to cover the costs of:

- Training
- C4C member travel expenses
- Refreshments
- Stationery and printing

## 5. Conclusions

- 5.1 During C4C's investigations, it consistently found that tenants and residents were unclear about what Community Engagement actually is. Most of the challengers have seen this first hand. This view is also based on the tenant surveys that we carried out.
- 5.2 C4C understands that there are difficulties in getting people involved and that there is a level of apathy amongst the community. This may be because they do not understand the difference they can make and the benefits to themselves.
- 5.3 C4C feels that improvements are needed in various aspects of communications. We feel that social media needs to be used more to encourage a wider engagement.
- 5.4 From our investigations we have found that the role of the TLO is poorly understood by both staff and TARAs and that this needs to be clarified and clearly defined.
- 5.5 C4C found that those volunteers currently involved do not represent the diversity of the community. This means that the service does not obtain views of a wider range of people.
- 5.6 C4C feels that TARAs do not operate consistently to a minimum standard. However, the new Recognition Policy will address this issue.



## 6. Recommendations

- R1. Promote TARAs at New Tenancy Visit and provide TARAs with contact details of new tenants
- R2. Consistent staff numbers committed to Community Engagement and TARA support.
- R3. Staff competent to give training to tenants
- R4. Time taken up during meetings by people who monopolise them – manage them
- R5. Go to where people are – young people/ single mums
- R6. Email adverts re recruitment activity
- R7. Use social media to feedback on action taken and ask new tenants to use Facebook
- R8. Monthly campaigns using social media on specialist topics
- R9. Ask Job Centres to encourage people to get involved and provide better links
- R10. Use tenants that are involved to promote benefits
- R11. Recruit to specific things not general and promote the fact that volunteers can pick and choose how much involvement they would like
- R12. Clearer role for TLOs – role in the community and for this to be communicated
- R13. Campaign to tell people benefits of getting involved
- R14. Use more “event driven” recruitment in “special” locations
- R15. Revamp the communication strategy and explain/define/promote what Community Engagement actually is and possibly rename as something more meaningful
- R16. Offer flexible involvement – home based / not dependent on attending meetings
- R17. Use video clips on website / blogs / meet the manager web chats / good news stories / links to Facebook
- R18. Use a wide variety of methods to recruit volunteers and involve tenants in the process
- R19. Integrate the Council Housing Service within the main Council website
- R20. Make the website more attractive with less text / more visuals and provide appropriate links to relevant external organisations
- R21. Consider renaming TLO as Tenant and Community Liaison Officer - TCLO
- R22. The new recognition policy should be reasonably and consistently applied and enforced where appropriate
- R23. A minimum TARA communication standard should be applied across all areas e.g. at least one newsletter a year
- R24. TARAs should be encouraged to share good practice
- R25. Provide information to levy payers about how the levy is used
- R26. Promote types of involvement that do not involve attending meetings and research what people are actually interested in
- R27. Use case studies to publicise the impact of involvement and provide regular updates
- R28. Navigation on the website needs to be made easier – especially the mobile platform. Links should be easier to find



## **Acknowledgements**

The team would like to thank Gary Westwood and Tina Gilbert from Planning and Performance for their invaluable assistance with this project. Without their support, this project would not have got off the ground. They were also instrumental in arranging the manager interviews and other meetings we have been to as part of our investigations.

We would also like to thank the following for their co-operation with our investigations and for allowing us to attend meetings to gather information and also to them for attending our meetings to answer the many questions we raised:

Assistant Manager and Housing Coordinator - Community Engagement Team  
Assistant Manager - North West Housing area  
Assistant Manager - Future of Council Housing Project Team  
Assistant Manager - Communications Team  
Assistant Director - Council Housing Service  
Assistant Director - Business Strategy  
Area Managers  
Tenant Liaison Officers  
TARAs



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# Challenge for Change

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*Outcomes and recommendations*



	<b>What is the C4C Judgement?</b>	<b>What evidence do we have to support that judgement?</b>	<b>What impact is this having on customers?</b>	<b>What is our recommendation?</b>
1	Engagement is difficult <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even harder with underrepresented groups such as young people</li> </ul>	Low attendance at meetings and with involvement generally – particularly young people	Customers are not being proportionately and fairly represented	R5 -Go to where people are – young people/ single Mums  R9 - Tell Job Centres to encourage people to get involved  R10 - Use tenants that are involved to promote benefits
2	There is general apathy towards involvement and volunteering	As above – and surveys of non-involved tenants / TARAs.  Many groups are populated by the same volunteers	Widespread involvement is not happening and there is a feeling that the “same old faces” are always involved. This can lead to a sense that there is a form of “closed shop” where all potential views are not heard. It can also lead to a lack of fresh ideas and different perspectives are not obtained.	R10 - Use tenants that are involved to promote benefits  R11 - Recruit to specific things not general  R13 - Campaign to tell people benefits of getting involved  R14 -Use more “event driven” recruitment in “special” locations  R18 - Use a wide variety of methods to recruit volunteers and involve tenants in the process
3	Specialist activity has less of a problem with recruitment	VAS interviews showed vacancies filled easily when subject of volunteering made clear. Also “it’s Your Shout” showed targeted work is more effective	Disproportionate involvement / under involvement if subject area not made clear	R11 - Recruit to specific things not general and promote the fact that volunteers can pick and choose how much involvement they would like  R6 - Email adverts re recruitment activity  R16 - Offer flexible involvement – home based / not dependent on attending meetings

	<b>What is the C4C Judgement?</b>	<b>What evidence do we have to support that judgement?</b>	<b>What impact is this having on customers?</b>	<b>What is our recommendation?</b>
<b>4</b>	People don't understand what Community Engagement actually means	C4C members themselves e.g. IA/TG. Tenant survey. TARA survey.	Potential involvement lost	R1 - Promote TARA's at New Tenancy Visit – how many people get referred on and what do TARA's do with them?  R7 - Use social media to feed back on action taken  R15 – Revamp the communication strategy  and explain/define/promote what Community Engagement actually is and possibly rename as something more meaningful
<b>5</b>	Communication methods are not clear enough in explaining what involvement entails	All communications not understood well enough.	Potential involvement lost	R7 - Use social media to feed back on action taken ask new tenants to use Facebook  R15 - Revamp the communication strategy  R20 - Make the website more attractive with less text / more visuals and provide appropriate links to relevant external organisations
<b>6</b>	The variety of people involved is limited and does not broadly reflect the customer profile	A number of people attend multiple groups and new initiatives tend to attract those already involved, There is no evidence of a regular influx of new recruits. Where there have been new recruits e.g. It's Your shout and C4C, retention has been an issue	Potential involvement lost. Due to the limited number of people involved, many in multiple groups, the same views are repeatedly expressed. This means the service does not obtain views of a wide range of people	R5 - Go to where people are – young people/ single Mums  R9 - Tell Job Centres to encourage people to get involved  R13 - campaign to tell people benefits of getting involved  R14 - Use more “event driven” recruitment in “special” locations  R26 Promote types of involvement that do not involve attending meetings and research what people are actually interested in

	What is the C4C Judgement?	What evidence do we have to support that judgement?	What impact is this having on customers?	What is our recommendation?
7	The impact of involvement is not made clear to those getting involved	Recruitment materials do make clear what personal gains may be achieved through volunteer involvement. Information provided is not direct enough.	Potential involvement lost. A greater variety of involved people is missed. Skills are not developed and opportunities to do so are not taken.	R27 Use case studies to publicise the impact of involvement more widely and provide regular updates
8	Communications not effective – social media is under used	Small numbers of Facebook followers. Little response to articles in The Bridge and In Touch. Get Involved pages not in “top ten” of webpage hits	Disproportionate and not future proof as there are significantly more old people involved than other age groups	R8 - Monthly campaigns using social media on specialist topics R17 Useblogs/videoclips.vox pops -Webchats on live topics -Use Sheffield Forum -Balanced use of Facebook i.e. not all about evictions
9	The benefits of involvement are not made clear to individuals	Tenant survey – misunderstanding of the virtues of involvement. Not promoted by any managers interviewed	Potential involvement lost and “personal improvement” opportunity missed. Lack of effort to build social capital and personal skills	R9 - Ask Job Centres to encourage people to get involved
10	The “getting involved” section of the website is not inviting / warm / welcoming enough, or easy to navigate	VAS did not think it was clear or user friendly (mobile version). C4C comparison with other local providers websites	Wider access is impacted affecting potential involvement	R28 Navigation on the website needs to be made easier – especially the mobile platform. Links should be easier to find R19 - Integrate the Council Housing Service within the main Council website

	What is the C4C Judgement?	What evidence do we have to support that judgement?	What impact is this having on customers?	What is our recommendation?
11	There is a lack of understanding within the service of the role of TLOs and also by tenants and TARAs. The role could be more “community” driven	Area Managers meeting. TARA survey - understanding of TLOs role and meeting with TLOs	TLO role not fully realised – possibly losing wider involvement with tenants beyond the scope of TARAs	R12 - Clearer role for TLOs – role in the community and for this to be communicated.  R21 - Consider renaming TLO to Tenant and Community Liaison Officer - TCLO
12	TARAs do not operate consistently	Not all TARAs are able to offer the same range of activities to levy payers and not all are proactive in engaging with members given their resources	Potential involvement lost and not all levy payers receive the same information about activities and opportunities for involvement	R1 - Promote TARA's at New Tenancy Visit – how many people get referred on and what do TARA's do with them?  R2 - Consistent staff numbers committed to CE and TARA support.  R22 - The new recognition policy should be reasonably and consistently applied and enforced where appropriate  R23 - A minimum TARA communication standard should be applied across all areas e.g. at least one newsletter a year  R24 - TARAs should be encouraged to share good practice  R25 - Provide information to levy payers about how the levy is used

### Other recommendations

- R3 Staff competent to give training to tenants
- R4 Time taken up during meetings by people who monopolise them - manage them



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# Agenda Item 8

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**Report of:** Janet Sharpe, Interim Director, Housing and Neighbourhoods Service

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**Subject:** The Housing+ model and its implementation

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**Author of Report:** Richard Cookson, Project Officer, Future of Council Housing Team.  
[Richard.cookson@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.cookson@sheffield.gov.uk) – x53908

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**Summary:**

The report helps the scrutiny committee understand more about the Housing+ model of council housing management and the potential benefits for tenants, their households and their communities. It covers

- What is Housing+?
  - What are its aims?
  - The implementation of the model
- 

**Type of item:** The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	✓
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to understand the progress that has been made and provide views and comments.

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**Background Papers:**

**Future of Council Housing, Housing+ proposals, March 2014 Cabinet meeting** [Sheffield City Council - Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday 19 March 2014, 2.00 pm](#)

**Category of Report:** OPEN

# Report of the Director of Housing and neighbourhood Service

## The Housing+ model and its implementation

### Introduction/Context

- 1.1 Cabinet approved the Housing+ proposals in March 2014. This report gives a summary of the Housing+ model of Council Housing management and a progress update on its implementation.

### 2 What is Housing+?

- 2.1 Housing+ is a new model of Council Housing management. It is based around Housing+ officers with responsibility for all the households in a defined 'patch' within local neighbourhoods. They deal with most aspects of the housing service, including rent, Anti-social behaviour (ASB) and supporting vulnerable tenants.
- 2.2 The emphasis is on more contact with customers in their own homes. Households will be offered an annual visit to discuss their tenancy, and support or advice will be drawn-in from the relevant specialists for those households who need it.
- 2.3 They will work in Neighbourhood Management Teams, which will also include a Neighbourhood Support Team whose role includes customer service and support to Housing+ officers.
- 2.4 As well as delivering front-line services, the Teams will work with other providers and local people to help strengthen the local community. They will be supported by a number of consolidated teams providing specialist advice, developing city-wide policies and delivering operational services.
- 2.5 The customer service function, including the Housing Call centre, remain in place and continue to be the main point of contact for customers.

### 3 What are the aims

- 3.1 The Housing+ model is a key way in which we realise the ambitions our tenants and their households have for their housing service. The development of the model can be seen as a thread running through the ballot to bring the housing service under direct Council control, through the 'It's Your Shout' consultation and the joint staff and customer Service Design groups.
- 3.2 At every stage customers have told us they wanted a housing service that provides;
  - 3.3 **Quality housing services.** Our customers want relevant, good quality housing services delivered in a way that recognises the differing needs of our customers. Housing+ officers will be a visible, local, responsive presence.

- 3.4 **Effective decision-making, control and influence.** There will be eight Neighbourhood Management Teams, their boundaries based on electoral ward boundaries to improve links with Councillors and with other Council services and partners.
- 3.5 **Strong partnership working.** The Council Housing Service will work with other services and organisations to achieve the best possible outcomes for tenants and their families. Neighbourhood Management Teams have a remit to continue to develop effective working relationships with council services and other agencies to the benefit of tenants and their households.
- 3.6 **Provide services beyond housing management.** Housing+ Officers (HPOs) will take a holistic approach to managing tenancies and liaise with tenants on a variety of issues including home skills, employment, education and health. They will focus on prevention, dealing with low level issues directly and signposting people to resources within the local community to help prevent problems escalating.
- 3.7 **Achieve value for money.** Tenants more easily accessing the support they need to live in their homes should reduce tenancy turnover and the significant costs this generates.
- 3.8 Housing+ will also achieve savings for the HRA through pre-emptive budgeting and rent advice, reduced demand for office-based customer contact by focussing on more home appointments and increased staff efficiency through streamlined working practices.
- 3.9 The new model could also achieve benefits for other Council services. By providing advice and low-level preventative work in disciplines outside the 'traditional' housing boundaries, the Council Housing Service will help tenants maintain their tenancy and reduce their need for more costly interventions. This will in turn achieve savings for both the Housing Revenue Account and for other Council services.

#### **4 Rollout and initial indicators of its success**

- 4.1 Implementation began by rolling out the Housing+ approach as a 'test phase' in the South East of the city in June. This gives the opportunity to test the policies and procedures introduced to support the new way of working. This will be evaluated during September and October and learning used to fine-tune the model.
- 4.2 All tenants and Leaseholders in the Area were informed of the changes and drop-in 'meet the team' sessions held in each ward.
- 4.3 Full roll-out is planned to begin on an area-by-area basis in April 2015, though this timescale may prove challenging.
- 4.4 Changes to the service include

- 4.5 Housing+ officers make earlier contact with customers in rent arrears. They are able to discuss affordability, debt, employment, where to access support and maximising household income
- 4.6 Housing+ officers are responsible for viewing properties with prospective tenants, the 'sign up' and visiting them early in their tenancy. This gives more consistency for customers and helps the relationship with the Housing+ officer develop at the start of the tenancy. Officers find customers are more receptive to difficult conversations if that relationship is already established.
- 4.7 Staff are taking on some responsibility for additional functions which go beyond our core housing work – this is the area of the role that we have called "Plus". An example is the 'Healthy Chat'. Public health staff have delivered training on this, and as a result the initiative can reach more people in the South East of the city through housing staff.
- 4.8 Housing+ officers will make close links with the TARAs on their patch, while the management team will lead on area wide community engagement.
- 4.9 The call centre and in-person customer service at Crystal Peaks First Point are largely unchanged. There are no plans to alter these services and they are still the main way in which customers contact the Housing service.
- 4.10 All households will be offered a visit from their Housing+ officer each year, the opportunity to discuss all aspects of their tenancy, other issues relevant to their tenancy such as health or employment and to agree a 'plan' for what they want to achieve in their tenancy.
- 4.11 Changes to the service were implemented gradually; both to allow staff time to get used to unfamiliar aspects of the role and to reduce the risk of disruption to services. For instance the annual visits began in August. Therefore we do not yet have the information on which to base a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the changes. However early signs are encouraging.
- 4.12 Performance in the South East against key Housing indicators such as arrears and relet times has remained steady.
- 4.13 We are also beginning to see evidence of the benefits the Housing+ model will bring in terms of early intervention and the development of good relationships between Housing+ officers and households in their patch. For example;
- 4.14 One tenant had lost benefits. He had no food, no money and was in poor health. His Housing+ officer helped to reinstate benefits, access support from a food bank and arrange a home visit from his GP. The Housing+ model meant we were aware of the situation earlier, were able to spend time with the customer and early intervention meant rent arrears did not escalate. The officer remains in regular contact.

- 4.15 Officers now ask tenants informally to tidy their gardens where this is necessary, without opening a formal Tenancy Management case in every instance. They find that in most cases tenants are responding to this, so saving the administration time previously spent on recording the details.
- 4.16 Housing+ officers find they are recognised and acknowledged when they are on their patch.
- 4.17 There are challenges. In order to fully realise the benefits of the model there is a clear need to streamline some systems and procedures and to identify where mobile technology may help staff work more efficiently. We are in the process of identifying a resource to take this work forward.

## **5 What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?**

- 5.1 Council housing represents almost a fifth of all Sheffield's housing, with over 48,000 tenants living in around 41,000 homes. A more tailored and locality-based approach to delivering council housing services has huge potential to make a real difference to people in the city.

## **6 Recommendation**

- 6.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to understand the progress that has been made and provide views and Comments.

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# Agenda Item 9

## Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014

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**Report of:** Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer  
Tel: 2735065  
Email: matthew.borland@sheffield.gov.uk

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**Subject:** South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel – Joint Working Protocol Proposal

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**Summary:**

This report provides the Committee with a proposed joint working protocol between the four South Yorkshire local authority crime and disorder scrutiny committees and the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel.

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**Type of item:** The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	X

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

1. Consider and agree the proposed working protocol attached as an appendix to this report
  2. Ask officers to report this agreement back to the Police and Crime Panel as appropriate
- 

**Background Papers:** None

**Category of Report:** OPEN

# **South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel – Joint Working Protocol Proposal**

## **1. Context**

- 1.1. The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee fulfils the role of the statutory Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee for Sheffield.
- 1.2. The Police and Crime Panel was established with the statutory function to scrutinise and hold to account the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire.
- 1.3. The Sheffield representatives on the Panel are:
  - Cllr Harry Harpham (Chair of the Police and Crime Panel)
  - Cllr Roger Davison
  - Cllr Talib Hussain
  - Cllr Roy Munn

## **2. Joint working protocols**

- 2.1. The Chairs of the four Crime and Disorder committees were invited to a meeting of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel in March 2014 to discuss potential joint working protocols and ways to share information. Cllrs Sheila Constance and Sioned-Mair Richards represented Sheffield's Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee at the meeting.
- 2.2. The meeting agreed a draft working protocol to formalise joint working arrangements be developed; and it would brought to the Police and Crime Panel and the four Crime and Disorder Committees for consideration and agreement. This draft is attached as an appendix to the report.
- 2.3. The working protocol has been agreed by the Police and Crime Panel at its meeting on 18th July 2014. Each of the Crime and Disorder Committees have now been asked to consider this draft and agree it for finalisation.

## **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1. The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:
  1. Consider and agree the proposed working protocol attached as an appendix to this report
  2. Ask officers to report this agreement back to the Police and Crime Panel as appropriate



Appendix A: Draft working protocol for South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel and the four South Yorkshire Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees.

## **Background to Local Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees**

Provisions in the Police and Justice Act 2006 extended the remit of local authorities to scrutinise crime and disorder functions and as of April 2009 each Council has been required to designate a Scrutiny Board to act as their 'Crime and Disorder Committee.'

'Crime and Disorder Committees' have the powers to review or scrutinise decisions made (or action taken) by the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the 'responsible authorities' that comprise it, but only with regards to activities which relate to the Partnership itself.

## **Impact of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011**

Although the Act did not change the legal remit of local authority Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees, they will not have the power to directly scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner because he/ she will not be a 'responsible authority' on the CSP.

Under previous arrangements the Scrutiny Committees could scrutinise the South Yorkshire Police Authority. The South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel will carry out part of the role previously exercised by Local Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees.

## **Working Together**

This document outlines the agreement between the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel and the four South Yorkshire Local Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees (CDCs) to work together in the following ways

### **1. Panel Meetings**

- 1.1 CDC Chairs will, at the very least, be invited to meetings of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel on an annual basis to engage in an open discussion about the impact of the Commissioner in each district
- 1.2 Should serious concerns arise during the year, the Panel may ask one or more CDC Chairs to attend additional Panel meetings and provide their perspective on the issue under consideration.
- 1.3 CDC Chairs can request an item to be put on the agenda of a Panel meeting by contacting the Chair of the Panel directly and explaining the reason for the request.

## **2. Influencing the Police and Crime Plan**

- 2.1 The Police and Crime Panel will encourage the Commissioner to have regard to the business cases and strategic assessments submitted by the individual authorities when developing his/ her Police and Crime Plan and subsequent commissioning arrangements.
- 2.2 CDCs will be sent a copy of all the draft iterations of the Police and Crime Plan that are submitted to the Panel and will be asked to return any comments or suggestions in advance of the Panel meeting during which the draft will be discussed.
- 2.3 CDCs are also asked to brief their authority's Panel Members in advance of any discussions on the Plan so the local perspective is sufficiently understood and so the Panel is made aware if the Plan does not have regard to the evidenced needs of communities across South Yorkshire.

## **3. Regular Exchange of Information and Intelligence**

- 3.1 The four CDCs will each complete an annual briefing note for use by all Panel Members to support them in assessing the impact of the Commissioner across South Yorkshire.
- 3.2 All completed briefings notes are to be formally approved by the CDC Chair before submission.
- 3.4 Unless a request is made to the contrary, all submissions will be circulated to the other CDCs in South Yorkshire to allow comparisons and further linkages to be made.
- 3.5 CDCs will be encouraged to play an active role in developing and adapting the themes covered within the briefing note.
- 3.7 The briefing note will, at the very least, relate to:
  - The findings of any relevant investigations carried out at the local level
  - Plans for any future investigations at the local level which may be of interest or relevance to the Panel and/ or other CDCs in South Yorkshire.
  - Any concerns the CDCs want the Panel to be aware of, to either raise directly with the Police and Crime Commissioner or to investigate further.
  - Any suggestions about the way in which the Panel could better support or influence the approach of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 3.8 Panel Members will have sight of all of the completed briefing notes as well as a covering note highlighting any common issues or trends.

3.9 CDCs may also choose to arrange regular verbal briefings with the Panel Members representing their authority on the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel.

#### **4. Co-ordinating Work Programmes**

4.1 CDCs will submit the latest iteration of their work programmes along with their annual briefing notes.

4.2 These work programmes will then be circulated to the four CDC lead officers to help identify linkages across their work programmes and will also be used by the host authority (RMBC) to identify linkages between the work of the CDCs and the Panel.

4.3 In cases where the CDCs are due to carry out investigations that are likely to be of interest to the Panel, the Panel may request a short briefing note summarising the results of these investigations.

4.4 Where one or more of the CDCs are due to investigate the same issue the Panel may decide to carry out the investigation at a sub-regional level on behalf of all four CDCs or in conjunction with them.

4.5 If the Panel identifies an issue for concern which relates to only one of the South Yorkshire districts, the relevant CDC may be asked to lead on the resultant investigation with support from a Panel Member from that authority.

4.6 CDCs will be notified of such a request from the Panel at the earliest possible opportunity and the Panel recognises that the CDC response to these requests will be dependent on the availability of resources at that time.

4.7 Equally, the Panel's ability to lead on investigations on behalf of the CDCs will be resource and work load dependent.

#### **5. Aligning Membership**

5.1 Where possible, at least one Panel Member will sit on each CDC to ensure the Panel has a detailed understanding of local issues as well as the skills necessary to effectively scrutinise the Commissioner.

5.2 Where membership is not aligned in this way a Panel Member from each authority will be designated as the lead Panel Member for their authority's CDC and as such will contribute to CDC meetings and investigations as and when required and subject to existing workload pressures.

#### **Endorsement**

These principles have been endorsed by:

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## Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014

**Report of:** Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer  
Tel: 2735065  
Email: matthew.borland@sheffield.gov.uk

**Subject:** Work Programme 2014/15

**Summary:**

This report provides the Work Programme for the Committee for the 2014/15 municipal year.

**Type of item:** The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	<b>X</b>

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

1. Comment on the work programme
2. Agree when to discuss the four Community Safety items
3. Agree the work programme

**Background Papers:** None

**Category of Report:** OPEN

## Work Programme 2014/15

### 1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the Committee's 2014/15 Work Programme. The work programme is a live document and based on the Committee's discussion at its July meeting and discussions with the Chair of the Committee.

### 2. Issues

2.1 Since the last Committee meeting the Work Programme has been amended so that the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan comes to the November meeting. This is so that officers can present the Committee with meaningful information upon which to comment. The Challenge for Change: Grass Cutting report back item has been added to the November meeting following the Committee requesting a progress report on this issue.

2.2 There were four separate items on Community Safety planned for November's meeting. However, as a consequence of the additional items this would have meant November's meeting would have a total 6 items.

2.3 The only Committee meeting with any space remaining on the agenda is the March 2015 meeting. The Committee are therefore asked to consider whether they wish to hold an additional meeting in December to consider the four community safety items or to consider them at the March 2015 meeting.

2.4 The Work Programme as it currently stands is below:

Topic	Background
<b>27th November 2014</b>	
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	The Committee's March 2014 meeting requested an update report on the HRA following the Tenant Conference in the autumn and that tenant representatives be invited to that Committee meeting.
Challenge for Change: Grass Cutting	The Committee received a report in July 2013 from the customer scrutiny panel known as Challenge for Change (C4C) which was set up in 2011 to perform an independent review of services delivered by the Council Housing Service (formerly Sheffield Homes). This report covered the project to examine the grass cutting service delivered by Sheffield Homes and the City Council's Parks and Public Realm. The Committee asked for a report back on the Council's response to the recommendations a further report on the actions resulting from the report's recommendations, with all the scrutineers involved in drafting the original report being invited to attend."

<b>The following four Community Safety items could be taken at a special meeting of the Committee in December 2014 or go to the March 2015 meeting.</b>	
Community Safety Partnership	The Council has a legal responsibility under the sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 to annually scrutinise the Community Safety Partnership. This could also pick up the impact of reduced resources for the Police which has been requested a Committee member.
Anti-social behaviour	The Committee added Anti-Social Behaviour to its list of topics for the 2014/15 work programme at its March 2014 meeting. This item could look at Sheffield's response to ASB legislation expected to become law in October 2014
Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM)	At its September 2013 meeting the Committee requested an annual presentation on the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting, with up to two additional partners to attend
Domestic Violence	Requested by two Committee members during 2014/15 as an issue the Committee could look at, following discussion at the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel.
<b>22nd January 2015</b>	
Private Sector Landlords	The Committee's January 2014 meeting requested that a report on the introduction of Selective Licensing in the Private Rented Sector be presented to the Committee in December 2014. Also to include the Page Hall Multi Agency Team and how that it progressing.
Social Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract (Kier Contract)	To look at the repairs and maintenance services to tenants' homes provided by Kier Services which started on 1 April 2014 and runs for 3 years
Implementation of the Allocations Policy	At its March 2014 meeting the Committee requested an update report on the Implementation of the Allocations Policy, to including examples of how the associated risks had been managed; and local tenant representatives who had been involved in the consultation process, be invited to the Committee meeting
<b>26th March 2015</b>	
Welfare Reform	An update as requested by Committee at the July meeting
tbc	
tbc	
<b>Written briefings</b>	
PRAM	A quarterly written report on actions relating to the development of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting in other parts of the City be provided to the Committee
Right to Buy Update	Written briefing circulated with the papers
Welfare Reform	Written briefing circulated with the papers
Management of HRA Land	Written update circulated with the papers on the project between the Communities and Place portfolios to carry out a review of land management arrangements.

2015/16	
Housing Plus - Walkabout	This would involve a one hour 'walkabout' followed by the Committee's formal meeting and could involve TARAs and other stakeholders.

### **3. Recommendation**

3.1 The Committee is asked to:

1. Comment on the work programme
2. Agree when to discuss the four Community Safety items.
3. Agree the work programme





## Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

25 September 2014

**Report of:** Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

**Subject:** Welfare Reform – September 2014 Update

**Author of Report:** Nicola Rees, Policy and Improvement Officer  
0114 27 34529  
[nicola.rees@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.rees@sheffield.gov.uk)

### Summary:

At the meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee in July 2013, members requested that an update on welfare reform issues be provided to Committee Members bi-monthly. This update report for September 2014 presents the most recent data relating to Under-occupancy (Bedroom Tax), Council Tax Support, Benefit Cap and hardship schemes/discretionary payments. There have been no significant policy developments nationally or locally since the Committee received the last welfare reform report in July 2014, therefore this report does not include a written update.

### Type of item:

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	X

**The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee is asked to note the contents of the update report.**

**Category of Report:** OPEN

# Welfare Reform in Numbers – September 2014

**3909**

Sheffield council tenants are affected by under-occupancy rules ('bedroom tax')



49 less than two months ago

**21%**

have paid in full the shortfall in their benefit resulting from under-occupancy

without receiving a DHP\* payment



down from 23% two months ago

**5%**

have paid nothing towards the shortfall in their benefit resulting from under-occupancy



up from 4% two months ago

**32,000**

working age tax payers in Sheffield receive council tax support



All of whom must now pay at least 23% of their Council Tax

**10,159**

summonses have been issued to Council Tax Support customers since April 2014 for non payment of Council Tax



**£2.8m**

= value of summonsed debt for Council Tax Support customers during 2014/2015



Average amount of debt = £278\*\*

**670**

Local Assistance Scheme grants have been awarded since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014

**£287,000**

= value of Council Tax Hardship Scheme awards made since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014

**277**

Local Assistance Scheme loans have been awarded since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014

**£585,000**

= value of Discretionary Housing Payment awards made since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014



**171** households in Sheffield are subject to the Benefit Cap

=

**846** children



All figures are to 31 August 2014

\* DHP = Discretionary housing payment

\*\* At this stage the full annual outstanding debt is summonsed, not the unpaid debt to that date

## **Right to buy update September 2014**

### **Government initiatives**

One of this year's initiatives was the proposed introduction of right to buy agents, these went live in August. There were two main aims of the agents

1. To support local authorities by answering basic enquiries from tenants about the right to buy process, including how to complete the application form.
2. To support tenants by offering a one stop shop service for questions about the right to buy process. They would explain an estimated timescale for the process and any likely expenditure for the tenant. Whilst the agent couldn't give financial or legal advice they could signpost them to people who could offer them advice for example the Money Advice Service or, Citizens Advice Bureaus

As per the previous update we are awaiting confirmation with regards to the Housing deregulation bill as to the proposed changes to the qualifying criteria for the right to buy scheme.

The September CPI figure will also determine the increase in maximum discount for the financial year commencing April 2015

### **Statistics and future projections**

2014 / 2015 to date (15.9.14)

Total sales for the period – 122

Total applications – 281

Average applications per month 52

Average sales per month 20 per month

Average selling price after discount £37,100

Forecast for the full year 288

