

**THE EXECUTIVE**

**Tuesday, 12 June 2007**

**Agenda Item 10b    Proposals for Changes to Community Housing  
Partnership (Pages 1 - 4)**

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12 JUNE 2007

### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

This report is submitted under Agenda Item 10. The Chairman will be asked to decide if it can be considered at the meeting under the provisions of Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 as a matter of urgency to avoid delaying the consultation process.

<b>Title: Proposed Changes to the Constitution of Community Housing Partnerships</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<p><b>Summary:</b> This report proposes some changes to the constitution and make up of Community Housing Partnerships.</p> <p>The changes are proposed in the light of the findings of the scrutiny panel of the 20 June 2005 and following discussions with the lead member.</p> <p>The changes are also proposed against a background of developing the neighbourhood management strategy and are complementary to that process.</p> <p><b>Wards Affected: All</b></p>	
<p><b>Implications:</b></p> <p><b>Financial: None</b></p> <p><b>Legal: None</b></p> <p><b>Risk Management: None</b></p> <p><b>Social Inclusion and Diversity:</b> A policy-proofing process has been carried out to assess the likely impact the proposed changes will have to the different demographic groups in the borough. Findings indicate that no group will be disproportionately affected.</p> <p><b>Crime and Disorder:</b></p> <p>Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a responsibility on local authorities to consider the crime and disorder implications of any proposals. There are no specific considerations arising fro this report</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation</b> That CHP Boards be consulted about changing the Constitution to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the number of meetings from 6 to 4 per year.</li> <li>• To change the name of Community Housing Partnerships to 'Housing Partnerships'.</li> <li>• To remove Freeholder and independent representation on CHPs.</li> <li>• Change the recruitment procedure so that 2 Councillors and 2 resident</li> </ul>	

representatives; either tenants or leaseholders (who have been on recruitment and selection training) sit on the panel.

- Exclude The Lead Member for Housing from being a member of the CHP Boards.

#### **Reason(s)**

- To demonstrate the Council's commitment to best practice in tenant and leaseholder participation.
- To help deliver the Community Priorities and the 3 Council priorities
- To contribute towards a strong and cohesive community
- To contribute towards the Neighbourhood Management Strategy 13 March 2007
- To share the aims of the Community Engagement & Consultation Strategy

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#### **Title:**

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## **1. Background**

1.1. The Council has around 23,000 tenanted and leasehold properties and it is important that we have robust arrangements for consultation information and engagement of tenants and leaseholders.

1.2. It is also important that the overall plan for tenant and leaseholder engagement is consistent with the Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy, and is conducted within the framework provided by the Neighbourhood Management Strategy. The Neighbourhood Management Strategy sets out this framework and is now the primary corporate means of facilitating engagement by all Council and partner services (including tenant and leaseholder participation) with local communities. When fully effective this will represent best practice in engagement, including tenant participation.

1.3. In parallel, the changes proposed in this report are necessary to reflect the views of the scrutiny panel and to make sure that resources in the tenant participation team are correctly focussed.

1.4. Tenant and leaseholder engagement has four main strands, these are as follows:

i) Housing futures forum

The overarching body which co-ordinates and oversees the development of approaches to housing management, decent homes, housing modernisation etc and is comprised of members, tenants, leaseholders, council departments, partners, tenants federation and the government office.

ii) Community Housing Partnerships

CHPs are the main way in which the Council works jointly with tenants and leaseholders to agree on local housing priorities, for capital spending, reviews of housing performance, changes to housing management policy

and raising the concerns of tenants generally. CHPs form part of the constitution of the council and currently meet six times a year each with up to 5 selected tenants, 1 leaseholder, 1 freeholder and 2 independent members from across the borough working in partnership with elected Members.

iii) Support for tenants and residents associations

This helps to engage people in local issues especially on high density housing estates and provides independent support through the tenants federation and national tenant bodies, help advise and support is provided in setting up new associations and small financial grants are made to support this process. It is usually tenants from individual tenants association that are nominated to join CHP boards.

iv) General community events tenants' magazine

A high quality newsletter is provided for all tenants which in future will include a dedicated section for the tenants federation, this new publication will replace Spotlight and In Partnership and will in future be distributed separately from the Citizen.

- 1.5. The tenants' federation have a resource centre in Dagenham and are supported with training, advice etc.
- 1.6. Community events such as the Town Show, Marks Gate open day, residents' unity week etc form an important part of reaching people who would prefer not to attend organised meetings, join boards and associations etc.
- 1.7. Greater emphasis has been placed on this aspect of tenant participation in recent years as a result of the tenants' survey which have shown that most people want to receive good quality information and have the chance to comment and be involved informally rather than through formal structures. This approach has been born out in the research behind the new Community Cohesion Strategy.

## **2. Proposed Changes**

- 2.1. The only proposed changes are to the title and constitution of CHPs. A more detailed tenant engagement strategy will be devised to ensure compliance with the Community Engagement Strategy, and to maximise the opportunities presented by the Neighbourhood Management Strategy.
- 2.2. The scrutiny panel felt that Community Housing Partnerships consumed too much resource in relation to their general purpose and suggested that resources be redistributed to other areas of tenant participation. They also felt that CHPs were not particularly effective as a means of communicating with the majority of tenants and that while they should continue to meet in public, the Council's main focus on contacting tenants generally should be through the newsletter, support for tenants and residents associations and through community events.
- 2.3. Subsequently, the development of the neighbourhood management approach will provide a route through which the interests of freeholders living on or around flatted

estates can be considered, so that Community Housing Partnerships will focus more on tenants and leaseholder issues.

- 2.4. For these reasons it is proposed to reduce the frequency of CHP meeting from six a year to four, to amend the constitution so that the membership for each Board will be up to 5 tenants and 1 Leaseholder and to rename the CHPs to Housing Partnerships.
- 2.5. These changes will result in a change to the Council's Constitution that will need to be approved by the assembly following consultation with the CHPs as required by the constitution.
- 2.6. Once the neighbourhood management service has become established, a further review will consider whether any additional synergies can be created between the work of tenant participation, Housing Partnerships and neighbourhood management.
- 2.7. The Lead Member for Housing should not be a member of the CHP Board.