

UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TENANT SERVICES AUTHORITY (TSA)

Report of the Director of Housing & Customer Service

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report seeks to update the Local Housing Board about some of the key areas of development of the Tenant Services Authority. The report will focus on two areas:

1. A general overview of how the Tenant Services Authority is progressing in the development of its role.
2. An update on the Phase 1b Local Conversation (for which Derby Homes has been chosen as a 'Trailblazer') and our work with the TSA to develop the empowerment standard.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Local Housing Board notes the content of the report, in preparation for when the TSA powers are switched on in April 2010.

3. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The TSA is a statutory body and was created out of the Housing Corporation by the 2008 Housing and Regeneration Act. It started to regulate Housing Associations as of 1 December 2008 and will also regulate Local Authorities and Arms Length Management Organisations like Derby Homes from April 2010.
- 3.2 The TSA has established two national offices – one in Manchester (North) and the other in London (South).
- 3.3 It is currently in the process of splitting its operations into areas. Derby Homes will be regulated as part of the TSA 'Central Region' and the Regional Regulator representative will be Deborah Ilott.
- 3.4 As a new organisation, the TSA has recently developed joint working frameworks with two extremely important existing organisations:
 - **The Audit Commission** – who will inspect housing organisations on behalf of the TSA to the standards laid down by the new regulatory framework. This joint framework also establishes that a key cross-cutting theme in the new regulatory framework will be Equalities – the equality of opportunity for tenants to receive and be involved in developing services.

- **The Housing Ombudsman Service** – this organisation handles complaints about how landlords deal with issues raised by tenants about the quality of their services. The TSA and the Housing Ombudsman have agreed to share information about such complaints.

3.5 In summary, this joint working by the TSA will help it to improve housing services and further protect the interests of tenants as highlighted by the Cave Review of 2007.

3.6 In July 2009, the Secretary of State, through the Communities and Local Government (CLG) department, issued a 41 page consultation paper on its directions to the TSA. The Government will direct the TSA to ensure that its operations are in line with Government policy. The scope of this direction is narrow and relates to 3 areas only

- Rents
- Quality of accommodation
- Tenant involvement

3.7 **Building the Capacity of Tenants to be Involved**

One of the more striking of the CLG proposed directions relates to tenant involvement and that of the suggested expectation that landlords should invest effective resources in the development of tenants' skills. Effective training of involved tenants is seen as contributing to their empowerment, and the TSA has responded very positively to this and is considering making this part of the empowerment standard (see below).

3.8 For Derby Homes, it may mean revising current resources on tenant training, development and support.

3.9 Derby Homes is involved in the work to develop the TSA's regulatory framework. Firstly in January 2009, we were invited along with other organisations in the UK to initiate the TSA Big Conversation taking part around the country this year. Phase 1b of this programme is expected to be completed by 8 September 2009.

3.10 Phase 1b of the Big Conversation gives tenants the opportunity to respond to the TSA proposed standards that were developed out of Phase 1a earlier this year.

3.11 We are working in partnership with the Derby Association of Community Partners (DACP) to deliver a Phase 1b Big Conversation event on the 24 August (this replaces a cancelled event in July) and we have also conducted Phase 1b exercises with some of our equalities groups.

3.12 As with all Trailblazer landlords, we enabled our tenants to decide on which TSA draft standards they wanted to review at a DACP Management Committee meeting at the Chaddesden Cafe on 15 June. The draft standards were taken to this meeting and the following were chosen by Derby Homes tenants:

- Allocations
- Repairs & maintenance
- Quality of accommodation
- Safety & security
- Customer service and choice
- Value for money (if there is time)
- Tenure (if there is time).

- 3.13 Before we pass on the results of Phase 1b to the TSA, we will use the material to inform our own tenant involvement strategy - a new draft of which we aim to have in place by December 2009. The TSA does not expect all the standards to be covered – tenants can choose what is important to them.
- 3.14 Secondly, we were also invited to join a national working group made up of other high-performing landlords, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), Tenants and Residents Association of England (TaRoE), The National Housing Federation (NHF), Confederation of Co-operatives Housing (CCH), the Audit Commission and the CLG. The group will have an agreed draft of the empowerment standard by 3 September 2009 to which will be added the results of the Big Conversation Phase 1b. The standards will then be adopted by the TSA Board at sometime in late 2009.
- 3.15 We have been informed that this working group will also be reviewing the National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts set up by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in 1999.

4. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

We have used the full existing timetable of events and meetings with tenants to carry out the Big Conversation as a Trailblazer organisation.

5. FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The use of existing mechanisms for consultation means that this extra work is has contributed very little or no extra cost to operations.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 We have taken Big Conversation material to our Derby Homes equalities groups - the Minority Ethnic Advisory Group (MEAG) and Tenants Reviewing Access Quality (TRAQ).
- 6.2 Our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender and Youth network are still under development with congested agendas and will be unable to meet the very challenging timetable for this work.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

There is risk that Derby Homes does not adapt to the new regulatory framework. The organisation could be inspected by a short notice inspection anytime from 1 April 2010.

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report

- Legal & confidential
- Personnel
- Environmental
- Health and Safety

If Board members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact the author, or the Chief Executive, phil.davies@derbyhomes.org - Tel 01332 711010

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Background Information: Every Tenant Matters, Professor Martin Cave, 2007. Directions to the Tenant Services Authority (Consultation Paper), CLG, 2009.

Supporting Information: None