

Council Report

Improving Places Select Commission Meeting- 15th November 2017

Title

Young Tenants Housing and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Review Action Plan

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No.

Director Approving Submission of the Report

Anne Marie Lubanski, Strategic Director Adult Care and Housing

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Ward(s) Affected

All

Executive Summary

The Council has commissioned Rother Fed to undertake two scrutiny reviews per year to inform service improvement and quality. The RotherFed Tenant Scrutiny Working Group was formed in April 2016 and their first review was to consider the engagement of young tenants in Council housing. This topic was selected as it had been established that younger tenants, aged between 16 and 34, were on the whole more dissatisfied with housing services.

This scrutiny review was agreed by Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) on 5th April 2017 and it was agreed that an action plan be brought back in six months detailing progress against the recommendations. Progress against the recommendations outlined in the action plan is set out at Appendix 1. The action plan has been agreed by the Housing Involvement Panel and the Housing and Neighbourhood Senior Management Team.

Recommendations:

That the Improving Places Select Commission:

- Agree the Action Plan and note the progress made to date.
- Agree that the Action Plan be brought back in a further six months updating on progress against the recommendations.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – RMBC Housing & Neighbourhood Services Engagement with Rother Fed's Young Tenants Scrutiny Review Action Plan

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – RMBC Housing & Neighbourhood Services Engagement with Rother Fed's Young Tenants Scrutiny Review Action Plan

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Title (Main report)

Young Tenants Housing and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Review Action Plan

1. Recommendations

That the Improving Places Select Commission:

- Agree the Action Plan and note the progress made to date.
- Agree that the Action Plan be brought back in a further six months updating on progress against the recommendations.

2. Background

The Council awarded the Tenant Federation Contract to Rother Fed in 2016 following a tendering process. As part of the contract, Rother Fed undertakes two scrutiny reviews per year to inform service improvement and quality across Housing and Neighbourhood Services.

The first review undertaken by the RotherFed Tenant Scrutiny working group focussed on the engagement of younger tenants. This topic was selected as it had been established that younger tenants, aged between 16 and 34, were on the whole more dissatisfied with their landlord's services. The 2016 STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) survey of tenants and residents found that 28% of tenants under 35 were dissatisfied with their landlord listening to their views and acting upon them. This compared to only 18% dissatisfied across other age groups. This report summarises the findings of the investigation including the recommendations made by the panel and the evidence leading to these conclusions being drawn.

The aim of the scrutiny review was to consider how to improve the engagement of young council tenants aged 16 to 35 years old in Rotherham.

The Objectives:

To find out:

- Why younger tenants are not engaging with their landlord.
- How younger tenants would like to be engaged with housing services, if at all.
- Why some younger tenants are dissatisfied with housing services.

To suggest how to:

- Improve the engagement of younger tenants and their satisfaction with housing services.
- Shape the future tenant involvement offer for younger tenants.
- Potentially improve the STAR survey results for satisfaction of young tenants that their landlord:

2.1 This scrutiny review is contributing towards the following Corporate Priorities, Safer Rotherham Partnership and Housing Strategy Priorities:

The Corporate Plan priorities such as:

- A strong community in a clean, safe environment
- Extending opportunity, prosperity and planning for the future

And the Safer Rotherham Partnership priorities such as:

- Building Confident and Cohesive Communities
- Reducing and Managing Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) and Criminal Damage

The Housing Strategy priority:

- Delivering high quality services and support, and peaceful and well managed neighbourhoods

3. Key Issues

The action plan (appendix 1) shows that all the recommendations are in progress with some of them already being achieved. These include young tenants being involved in the development of the pre tenancy workshops. Younger tenants have already started to get involved in reviewing documents such as the Customer Care training package which will be rolled out soon to Housing and Neighbourhood Services.

We are working closely with Rother Fed and Target Housing to develop the Younger Tenants Forum. This will enable us to involve more young tenants so they can actively inform our services to meet their needs.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

Below are the recommendations which are included in the action plan which are currently all on track.

- A. Provide support to RotherFed in the development of a forum for younger tenants.
- B. Provide suitable training for all council staff coming into contact with younger tenants, particularly in the need to show mutual respect and empathy.
- C. Develop a menu of involvement opportunities for younger tenants and share this with both council staff and tenants.
- D. Review all council documents, in particular those produced by housing services, to make them easier to understand for younger tenants. These should be tested out by young volunteers.
- E. Evaluate the new tenant workshops being introduced in April 2017 with younger tenants and make improvements as necessary to the format and content.
- F. Ensure that the tenancy support team approach is working well and increase awareness of this service by making it clear what the benefits of the service are to younger/new tenants.

- G. Make sure that all younger tenants know who their housing officer is and how to contact them, by:
 - a. Including points of contact for relevant teams in the new tenant packs and explaining the services they provide.
 - b. Introducing a system of notifying tenants of any changes to their neighbourhood housing officer, ideally through the newsletter or mail system.
- H. Consider the use of training sessions in schools to raise awareness of the implications of renting your own home, including responsibilities and financial awareness.
- I. Develop the Home Matters newsletter to make it more 'young person' friendly by incorporating a young tenants section or similar.
- J. Improve the council website by making: the website more accessible and attractive to younger people.
- K. The Home Matters magazine is available on the website.
- L. Review the social media used for engaging with tenants, introducing ways of developing tenant consultations and keeping in touch through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.
- M. Develop a 'Tell Us Once' service for new council tenants, whereby they only have to inform one agency of their move. This information should then be shared with Council Tax, Benefits and Housing officers as appropriate.

Fuller details of progress against the Action Plan are set out in Appendix 1.

5. Consultation

The Action Plan has been agreed by the Housing Involvement Panel (Chaired by Rother Fed and includes Rother Fed board members and other council tenants) and the Housing and Neighbourhood Senior Management Team both on 22nd August 2017.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

Delivery against the recommendations in the action plan will be monitored through the Housing Involvement Panel.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

None arising from this progress report.

8. Legal Implications

None arising from this progress report.

9. Human Resources Implications

None arising from this progress report.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

This will complement the delivery of the Housing Strategy that will contribute to the Corporate Plan priority of 'Every child making the best start in life. Children require safe, warm homes to grow up in if they are to learn and fulfil their potential'. Housing cuts across each of the themes identified to ensure Rotherham is a child friendly borough.

This scrutiny review also significantly contributes to the Corporate Plan priority 'Every adult secure, responsible and empowered'.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

This scrutiny review is under one of the key priorities in the Tenant Involvement Strategy is to 'Listen to more disadvantaged' and 'underrepresented' individuals and groups, and act upon their advice/opinions/views'. An Equality Analysis has been carried out on the Tenant Involvement Strategy with Rother Fed.

Tenants being involved will complement the Housing Strategy which will have a positive impact on addressing homelessness, affordable housing targets, economic regeneration, positive landscape and environmental improvements in some of our most deprived neighbourhoods around the town centre, and support young people and older people to live independently and with a choice over their housing options.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

The Housing and Neighbourhoods Senior Management Team will continue to work with Rother Fed towards delivering the recommendations in the action plan. Some of these recommendations will involve cross collaboration across the relevant council services and partners.

13. Risks and Mitigation

The key risk is the failure to engage young tenants and inability to deliver against the recommendations in the action plan. This will be mitigated by ongoing monitoring, scrutiny and evaluation of the recommendations by the Improving Places Select Commission, Housing Involvement Panel and the Housing and Neighbourhoods Senior Management team.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Zafar Saleem, Neighbourhood Partnerships Manager, Housing and Neighbourhood Services, Adult Social Care & Housing.

Tom Bell, Assistant Director Housing and Neighbourhood Services, Adult Social Care & Housing.