

**RESPONSE TO 'CONSULTATION' REPORT PREPARED BY THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE HOUSING FORUM**

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**1. Purpose**

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Forum have submitted a report to this month's MKCHF meeting detailing examples of alleged poor communication between the council and tenants. This report has been prepared in response to these examples.

**2. Response to examples****2.1 Housing allocations policy – Forum members have been informed that the allocations policy is being reviewed and that the Forum would be invited to take part in the consultation.**

In particular the matter has been discussed at the MKC Housing Forum meetings on 19<sup>th</sup> October, under the report entitled 'Update on Housing Options Process and a Report on GPR Housing'. Also included in this meeting was a report on the Granby Court Lettings Initiative. Under Matters arising on the meeting of the 17<sup>th</sup> November it was acknowledged that Granby Court was a trial scheme and under item 12 an report entitled 'Sheltered Housing, implementation of the Housing Strategy' was heard, and again, under the matters arising on the 18<sup>th</sup> January it was acknowledged that wide consultation would be needed regarding the review of the Allocations policy.

With regard to the Sheltered Housing Schemes and their future, a meeting was held with the executive at the time in the early summer of 2006 to discuss what would be happening to schemes. It was felt at this time that the information was sensitive because of the need to inform scheme residents and their relatives, who were widely consulted with regard to their housing choice.

**2.2 Changing MK Housing – Forum members have been requested for their involvement in the process, including the housing options process. Subject to client agreement, Forum members have been offered the opportunity to sit in on Housing Options interviews, however as we offer a walk-in service there are logistical problems, as well as data protection issues.**

The options process has been discussed at length in the Forum, particularly in October 2006.

2.3 Welcome Pack – as previously discussed this pack was drawn up under the Systems Thinking intervention, with the needs of new customers in mind and based on the experience of tenants just starting their tenancies. A survey of new tenants who received the pack was undertaken to within one month of their tenancy starting to ensure that it met with their needs.

2.4 Implementation of Systems Thinking – while the intervention started within the staff group, tenant reps were asked to join the staff on the four themes, known as the ‘four strands’ in the Executive and TP meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2006 and in the Executive and TP Meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2006.

A special ‘Systems Thinking’ information day was held at the Well in Willen in early 2006, to ensure Tenant Reps had an understanding of what was happening and the reasoning behind it. This was well attended by Tenant Reps.

Since then considerable time has been dedicated to working with Forum members and the systems thinking process. In particular the meeting held at the Tenants Resource Centre on 27<sup>th</sup> July, 10<sup>th</sup> August, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 31<sup>st</sup> August and 7<sup>th</sup> September working exclusively on tenant participation and systems thinking.

2.5 Setting up Denbigh – the BSTG was closely involved in the set up and we maintain that this does constitute valid and recognised tenant involvement. The minutes to BSTG meetings are sent through to the MKC Housing Forum as an agenda item on a regular basis.

In addition, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Forum were offered, ex-officio, positions on the BSTG at the Executive and TP meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2006. Further discussion was held on the meeting of the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2006 when they decided there was no rush to make a decision on this matter and it would be returned to. To date there has been no notification from the Executive that they would like to pursue this.

Tenant Reps have also been offered the chance to spend time at the Denbigh site (hosted by MITIE) and to go out with operatives on jobs. To date only three have taken up this offer.

2.6 Role of the Forum survey – the council would be interested to know what Forum members are planning to do with the survey results.

2.7 Granby Court – see response in 2.1.

2.8 Information requested under Freedom of Information Act – for the record this information request was never refused, and a meeting with the relevant member of staff was offered, but not taken up.

**3. Conclusion**

Forum members have been given opportunities to have a say in many of the examples quoted. Unfortunately most of these opportunities have not been taken up. The council is obliged to consult its customers who are 'substantially affected' by proposed changes in housing management. The council will continue to do this but has to use its discretion in deciding when and how to fulfil this obligation.