

TO: COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 4TH MARCH, 2003

SUBJECT: TENANT STOCK OPTIONS APPRAISAL

FROM: TENANTS PANEL / ITA

1. PURPOSE OF ITEM

- 1.1 To update the Community Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Tenant Stock Options Appraisal and the work of the Independent Tenant Advisor.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In December 2001 the Council received the findings of a housing stock options appraisal undertaken to review the housing element of its own business plan and to meet central government requirements to consider the main investment options for its housing stock in the light of the Government's 'Decent Homes' standards.

The main housing stock options considered were:

Transfer to either a new or existing registered social landlord
Council retention
Setting up an Arms Length Management Organisation
Utilising the Private Finance Initiative
Securitization

- 2.2 In 2002 the Council determined to make no decision to formally pursue any of these options until its tenants and leaseholders had the opportunity to investigate the options further and make known their views to the Council.
- 2.3.1 To this end a panel of tenants and leaseholders appointed an Independent Tenant Advisor – Priority Estates Project (Midlands) – in October 2002 to help them carry out a tenant stock options appraisal.

3. INDEPENDENT TENANT ADVISOR – ACTIVITY TO DATE

- 3.1 The project plan for the Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) is attached as Appendix 1. This addresses the three main themes of the tenant stock options appraisal work programme: establishing a Council-wide tenant and leaseholders forum, providing information about the main stock options to all Council tenants and leaseholders and conducting a survey of tenant and leaseholder opinion.
- 3.2 From appointment to the end of February the main areas of ITA activity have been to:
- Establish a Council-wide forum – Tenant Panel – to direct the work of the ITA by agreeing the ITA project plan and receiving reports regarding progress
 - Contact all Council tenant/leaseholders organisations and make presentations regarding the stock option appraisal process

- Visit all sheltered and very sheltered housing schemes and hold short meetings with residents
- Send out an initial newsletter about the tenant stock options appraisal to all Council tenants and leaseholders
- Contact and attend meetings of local community and voluntary organisations who have Council tenant / leaseholder members who are black and ethnic minority, disabled, young people or from other 'hard to reach' groups
- Inform the local media of tenant stock options appraisal events such as Tenant Panel meetings
- Liaise with Council Officers and the Community Housing Taskforce
- Provide training to Tenant Panel members on Council business planning, the Housing Revenue Account and capital and revenue budgets
- Plan the first Council-wide forum for leaseholders
- Hold initial discussions with the Tenant Panel regarding the design of, and type of questions to be asked in, the survey

4. INDEPENDENT TENANT ADVISOR – ACTIVITY TO PROJECT END

- 4.1 During March and April ITA work activity will concentrate on local meetings and arranging 'drop-ins' at Council premises or near local shops in order to provide as much information as possible to tenants and leaseholders about the stock options, the appraisal process and the survey.
- 4.2 There will be a further newsletter sent to all tenants and leaseholders in early April in advance of the survey.
- 4.3 The Housing Services Manager and the Business Manager from Property Services will attend the March Tenant Panel meeting to update Panel members on the Council's financial re-appraisal that is currently being undertaken. Also, a representative of the Community Housing Taskforce has agreed to attend the April meeting of the Tenant Panel.
- 4.4 Study visits to other areas/landlords and two further Tenant Panel training sessions are also planned. The latter will cover:
- Structure of Registered Social Landlords, Arms Length Management Organisations and managing agents under the Private Finance Initiative, including roles and responsibilities of Board members
 - Finances of, and especially investment by, RSLs, ALMOs and PFI schemes
- 4.5 The ITA will facilitate the first meeting of the Council-wide leaseholders forum (6th March, 2003) and will organise a second leaseholders forum by mid-April to identify leaseholders' issues about the housing stock options appraisal.
- 4.6 The Tenant Panel will continue to meet monthly to receive progress reports from the ITA and to monitor its work.

5. SURVEY OF TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS

- 5.1 It is anticipated that the survey will take place over a three week period commencing in mid-April.
- 5.2 The survey will be a postal one augmented by door knocking. There will also be the opportunity for people to complete their survey forms at local 'drop-ins'.
- 5.3 The Tenant Panel has set a minimum survey return target of 15%.
- 5.4 The Tenant Panel and ITA recommend that there should be a financial inducement such as a prize draw to encourage people to complete and return their forms.
- 5.5 The ITA will analyse the results of the survey in June 2003 and report to the Tenant Panel and the Council in June 2003 so that the Council can consider tenant and leaseholder views when it looks at which housing stock option to formally pursue later this year.
- 5.6 A third newsletter to all tenants and leaseholders will be issued in June. This will summarise the findings of the survey and indicate how the Council will carry the stock options appraisal process forward.

6. POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 The Tenant Stock Options Appraisal 2002-2003 meets the requirements of the Council decision in 2002 to ask its tenants and leaseholders to investigate the stock options further. It also reflects the Council's commitment to fully involving tenants and leaseholders in Council decision-making as expressed in its Tenant Participation Compact.
- 6.2 The budget for the Tenant Stock Options Appraisal of £25,000 is met from the Housing Revenue Account.

7. OUTCOME REQUIRED

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the report and comment on the Tenant Panel/ ITA recommendation in 5.4 above.

Jean Hartley
Housing Services Manager

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Community Scrutiny Committee

Areas in District Affected: All

Executive Portfolio Area and Holder: Councillor Alan Boad - Housing Services.

For further information about this report please contact:

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WARWICK DC Tenant stock options appraisal

Independent Tenant Advisor - Project plan

OCTOBER

- Initial meetings with Council officers, Tenant Federation 2000 and User Group

NOVEMBER

- Meetings with TRAs
- Meeting to establish stock options Tenant Panel (including servicing etc)
- Meeting and liaison with Council officers

DECEMBER

- Tenant Panel 1
- Meetings and liaison with Council officers
- Establish database and administrative systems to support Tenant Panel

JANUARY

- Tenant Panel 2
- Meetings with Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs)
- Meeting and liaison with Council officers

FEBRUARY

- Newsletter 1
- Fact sheets
- Tenant Panel 3
- Training session 1
- Survey draft 1
- Meetings with TRAs,
- Meetings at sheltered and very sheltered housing schemes

MARCH

- Meeting to establish Council-wide leaseholders' forum
- Tenant Panel 4
- Survey draft 2
- Meeting and liaison with Council officers
- Training session 2
- Meetings with TRAs
- Meetings at sheltered and very sheltered housing schemes
- Estate drop-ins

APRIL

- Newsletter 2
- Meeting of Council-wide forum for leaseholders about the housing stock options appraisal
- Survey starts
- Targeted door knocking
- Tenant Panel 5
- Meeting and liaison with Council officers
- Meetings with TRAs
- Estate drop-ins

MAY

- Tenant Panel 6
- Targeted door knocking
- Returned surveys analysed
- Survey report draft 1

JUNE

- Tenant Panel 7
- Meeting and liaison with Council officers
- Survey report finalised
- Training session 3
- Newsletter 3

JULY

- Conference – Councillors, Tenant Panel representatives, Community Housing Taskforce and ITA