

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE - 13th MARCH, 2000

SUBJECT: TENANT COMPACT

FROM : HOUSING

1. **Purpose of Report**

1.1 To present the Tenant Compact aims and action plan agreed at the meeting of tenants, officers and members on 26th March, 2000, to announce the formation of a tenants Federation and to propose the additional post of Tenant Participation Assistant be created to play a key role in achieving the aims of the Compact.

2. **Background**

2.1 In July 1999 the Government published The National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts. All Council landlords are expected to agree and sign formal agreements (Compacts) with their tenants and leaseholders on how they are to be involved in decisions relating to their homes.

2.2 It was initially proposed that Compacts should be complete by April 2000, however the Government has revised this and now it is necessary to achieve agreed aims and an action plan by this date. This revision is welcomed as it has become apparent that Warwick District Council would not achieve the April deadline without hurrying the process and alienating tenants.

2.3 Despite the fact that the Compact has yet to be formally agreed, members can be assured that much of the groundwork towards creating a compact has been ongoing. Key factors have been the establishment of focus groups, the ongoing work with the User Group, and the establishment of the Federation 2000.

3. **Federation 2000**

3.1 In February the Federation 2000 was formally constituted as the umbrella organisation representing local residents groups. This group will enable local groups to share information, develop local initiatives and co-ordinate appropriate training, as well as representing the joint interests of local groups to the Council.

3.2 The Federation 2000 and the User Group are both organisations of equal standing, and will represent different styles of participation. The Federation will represent organised groups working at a local level, and is by definition only open to those who represent a local residents group. The User Group represents tenants across the district and its membership is open to any tenant. In order to emphasise this parity it is proposed that both groups are able to participate equally in the new democratic structures.

4. **Aims and Action Plan Events**

- 4.1 The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) were chosen by a joint panel of tenants and officers to assist with Compact negotiations following the submission of quotations and work plans and a panel interview. TPAS then ran three meetings:

Tenants & Leaseholders Briefing	8 th February, 2000
Group Leaders & Officers Briefing	9 th February, 2000
Compact Action Plan Event	26 th February, 2000

- 4.2 A wealth of comments and views were collected and will be fed into the Tenant Compact process. However, the main focus of these events was to agree the Compact Aims and an Action Plan (Appendix 1).
- 4.2 The main feature of the action plan is the establishment of a Compact Working Group consisting of four Members, four officers, four members of the District Wide User Group, and four members of the Tenants Federation (Federation 2000). This group will examine and agree the content of the Tenants Compact. A final consultation with all tenants and leaseholders will take place in September and it is proposed that the Compact will be formally signed later in the year.
- 4.3 It is proposed to provide transport to and from meetings for those members of the Tenant Compact Group that require it, also to offer a child/adult care allowance at a standard rate. Bearing in mind the size of the group, it is anticipated that this would be covered within the existing budget.

5. **Tenant Participation Assistant**

- 5.1 The Government has provided Warwick District Council with £15,800 for this year and a similar sum for next year to help the Council and its tenants introduce new Tenant Participation Compacts, after which the funding will cease.
- 5.2 In order to meet the Compact core standards there is an increasing need for administering resources for tenant participation ranging from grants to arranging attendance and transport to meetings, monitoring standards and performance involves collecting and collating information, and probably the most important area is the increased demand for information on participation policy, standards and opportunities that must accompany the Compact. It is unlikely that we could meet these standards to the degree that tenants will demand in the formative years of the Compact without this extra resource.
- 5.3 It is proposed to employ a Tenant Participation Assistant to undertake this administrative and organisational work, and produce information for tenant participation. This post would also assist the Tenant Development Officer - freeing our most experienced member of staff from some of the administrative tasks that he would otherwise have to undertake and allowing him to concentrate on the content of meetings rather than their organisation. This post, will be subject to fundamental review and budgetary review after two years, when government funding ceases.
- 5.4 Consultation with Residents Groups, the Federation and User Group is ongoing at this point and it is proposed that members agree this post subject to the completion of consultation with these groups. A Hay evaluation of the grade of this post should be available by the date of this Committee.

9. **Key Issue Strategies**

- 9.1 This report supports the Corporate Strategy and Social Key Issues:

- i) "The District Council will build greater community involvement into its decision making process. The District Council is committed to freedom of information and to being open and accountable to local people."

10. **Recommendations**

- 10.1 Members endorse the Aims and Action Plan agreed at the Tenant Compact Event 26th February, 1999 (Appendix 1) and the associated provision of transport and care allowance where appropriate.
- 10.2 Committee to elect the four member representatives to the Compact Working Group.
- 10.3 The post of Tenant Participation Assistant be created to support the launch of the Tenant Compact, to be subject to budgetary review after two years.

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Background Paper

National framework for Tenant Participation Compacts, DETR, 1999

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Area(s) In District Affected: All

PW/JH
02.03.00

Appendix 1

Warwick District Council

Tenant Participation Compact

Introduction

With the help of TPAS we held a very successful conference for tenants and leaseholders entitled 'Getting involved with Warwick District Council' on Saturday 26th February. Sixteen residents attended as well as five elected members and several members of staff. The conference followed on from the briefing sessions held for tenants and leaseholders on the 8th February and that for elected members and staff on 9th February.

The main purpose of the conference was to not only encourage people to get involved but also to agree the best way forward in developing a Tenant Participation Compact for the District. The DETR require that all councils should have clear aims and an Action Plan in place by April 2000.

The Conference agreed we should begin in developing a district wide Compact with the opportunity of developing local ones at a later stage.

The Conference also agreed the overall aims of the Compact and an Action Plan, including who should be involved.

Warwick District Council's Tenant Participation Compact

The Aims:

Introduction

The Compact should be a joint document agreed between tenants, leaseholders, members and officers. It should state that it is an agreement between the tenants and the Council with a menu of opportunities. It should also clearly state how changes will be agreed and how the agreement will be monitored and reviewed.

1. It was agreed that the Compact should involve all the Council's main partners and stakeholders but in the first instance the following should be included and involved at an early stage:
 - All of the Council's tenants, leaseholders and their families/households
 - Prospective tenants and leaseholders
 - Officers from across all departments within the Council
 - Elected Members
 - Local Parish Councils
 - Local Housing Associations
 - Contractors employed by the Council

2. At a later stage involvement could be extended to include:
 - Private owner occupiers
 - Private landlords
 - County Councillors
 - Members of Parliament
 - Other Agencies

3. To begin with the Compact needs to state clearly where we are now and where we want to be. This should include a review of all existing information available to tenants for example:
 - All information should be co-ordinated
 - The Tenant's Handbook should be reviewed and then regularly promoted
 - Home News should become more of a discussion document

4. The Compact needs to clearly define and offer the following
 - _A range of involvement and participation options available to all tenants and leaseholders so that individuals can choose how and when to become involved
 - _The service that is currently available to tenants and leaseholders with detailed specifications

5. It was also agreed that the drafting of the Compact should link into the existing structure by incorporating the User Group and the Federation.
6. It was agreed that there needs to be clear guidance on how the above groups and tenants and leaseholders in general can input into the decision-making process and what power they have to make decisions.
7. The Compact needs to clearly describe how and when tenants and leaseholders will be consulted and the action that will be taken as a result.
8. Given the comments made about the performance of the contractors in carrying out repairs it was agreed that they should be encouraged to take part in the process.
9. The Compact will also need to be incorporated into any changes in the structure of the Council as a result of the proposed modernisation.

APPENDIX 2

Action Plan

An Action Plan was agreed as follows:

Action	Who involved	Target Date
A Tenant Participation Compact group be set up to begin to draft the Compact	Members of the group to be as follows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •8 Tenants, including Leaseholders (to be selected by and from the Users Group and the Federation •4 Officers •4 Elected Members 	First meeting by the end of March 2000/Early April
The above group to draw up terms of reference and agree how they will involve <u>all</u> tenants and leaseholders	As above	At the first meeting
Fundamental review of what happens now	All	April
The group to look at specific areas such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •repairs •menu of involvement options •involving rural areas •tenants role in the modernised structure •comparison with others 	Members of the group and other interested parties such as contractors (The group might like to consider setting up sub-groups as working parties to look at each subject)	April/May/June
Report on all of the above	All	July
Draft for consultation	Group	August

Draft Compact to the relevant committee	Officers and Elected Members	September
Consult all Tenants and Leaseholders	All	September
Re-draft as required	Group	End Sept/Oct
Final Agreement	All	End Oct.
Compact Signed and Launched	All	Dec/Nov.