

REPORT OF HOUSING REVIEW PANEL

(Meeting held 19 September 2001)

1. TENANTS' SATISFACTION SURVEY (REPORT A) (MINUTE 22)

A Tenants' Satisfaction Survey has been carried out recently with 63.6% of the tenants throughout the District having replied. The Survey gives details of the profile of Council tenants; outlines their satisfaction with their properties and the services received from the Council; contact with the landlord; communication; tenant involvement; views on the tenant newsletter "Round the Houses"; rent charges; and also drew some broad conclusions.

Some 88.8% of tenants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the Council as landlord. Specific concerns were also expressed relating to litter and graffiti; car parking, landscaping and lighting and abandoned cars. Whilst the Crime and Disorder Panel have recently considered and largely discounted the idea of introducing Community Wardens, the Housing Review Panel feels that these could be a satisfactory way of tackling anti-social behaviour. A future report is to be submitted on the feasibility of providing such a scheme.

The Panel has noted that two new administrative staff have been appointed in the Housing Management Section to give Housing Estate Officers more time for visiting their areas.

A large number of tenants have expressed a wish to become more closely involved with tenant groups and the Council and, to this end, a District-wide seminar or similar event is likely to be held. Transport for tenants will also be arranged.

Various elements identified by the Panel will be the subject of future reports for incorporation in the Panel's Work Programme.

2. ARRANGEMENTS FOR TENANT PARTICIPATION (REPORT B) (MINUTE 23)

The Panel has been addressed by an officer and a tenant from Gosport Borough Council on their experiences of increasing tenant participation. In Gosport, attempts are being made to involve a wider age range of tenants. The Borough Council has established a resource centre which makes available a wide variety of information and computers for the use of tenants. Council officers are accessible via e-mail or direct telephone lines and a freefone number. The Borough Council's website is also used by tenants in the form of a message board.

The Panel believes that "Round the Houses", the tenants' newspaper, is valued by tenants although some further minor adjustments may be necessary. Tenants should retain editorial control.

The existing Tenant Working Parties can usefully report to the Panel in order to improve the existing strong partnership with tenants. The Panel has noted that the Tenant Participation Officer post is currently vacant and once this is filled, existing participation levels should improve yet further.

The Panel will also consider the possibility of meeting at different venues across the District in order to encourage attendance by tenants. The timing of the meetings and their format will also need to be considered.

Further proposals designed to widen participation and improve communication with tenants will be considered at the November meeting of the Panel, following the appointment of the new Tenant Participation Officer.

3. RENT ARREARS/RENT FREE WEEKS (REPORT C) (MINUTE 24)

The Panel has considered a report on a recent review of the rent arrears recovery procedures. These procedures have been thoroughly updated and the report showed that the service performed well and was low in cost by comparison to other local authorities. Continuing comparisons with other organisations would be made and working methods will also be reviewed to ensure best practice is adopted.

In addition, the possibility of providing rent-free weeks has not been generally favoured by tenants and therefore, the Panel has decided to take no further action at this stage.

**Cllr B Rule
CHAIRMAN**

(HS190901)