

**Name of meeting: Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel Meeting**

**Date: 14th November 2019**

**Title of report: Tenant Involvement and Engagement**

**Purpose of report: To update the Scrutiny Panel on the implementation of ‘Get Involved’ - the KNH Tenant Involvement Strategy**

<b>Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?</b>	<b>Yes</b>  If yes give the reason why - – delivery of the strategy will continue to have significant effect on those electoral wards that include KNH managed estates.
<b>Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan</u> (key decisions and private reports)?</b>	<b>Key Decision – No</b>  <b>Private Report/Private Appendix – No</b>
<b>The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>  If no give the reason why not? The report provides an update only on progress made in relation to a Key Decision taken by Cabinet in 2017.
<b>Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> &amp; name</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?</b>	<b>Give name and date for Cabinet / Scrutiny reports – Karl Battersby 30th September 2019</b>  <b>Not Applicable.</b>  <b>Not Applicable.</b>
<b>Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a></b>	<b>Councillor Cathy Scott</b>

**Electoral wards affected: All**

**Ward councillors consulted: None**

**Public or private: Public**

**Has GDPR been considered? Yes**

## **1. Summary**

In 2017 Kirklees Council took the decision to decommission the Kirklees Federation of Tenants and Residents Association (KFTRA), known operationally as Communities Who Can (CWC), with effect from 1 October 2017. CWC provided support to a cohort of Tenants and Residents' Associations (TRAs) and Community Voices (CVs) across Kirklees and helped tenants to develop new groups. CWC were also funded by the Council directly to deliver a Tenant Scrutiny model for Kirklees.

This decision was informed by the fact the existing model suggested low engagement levels, limited and uninspiring ways for tenants to get involved and, an approach to tenant scrutiny that was disconnected from any formal governance arrangements and did not align with the Council's or KNH's strategic priorities. As a result there was little evidence of the contributions from

tenants in shaping services, influencing decisions and driving service improvements. It was also acknowledged that the model no longer complied with good practice and was not aligned to the Regulator for Social Housing's Consumer Standards.

As a result, the Council commissioned KNH to review the current model and to put forward recommendations for a new, modern and innovative involvement model which reflects best practice, promotes the use of technology, offers value for money and supports communities to do more for themselves and each other. The KNH Board also asked that the new approach include proposals that empower tenants to be more resilient, strengthen the tenants' voice in shaping services, influencing decision and driving improvements and is outcome focused.

In June 2018, in consultation with the Council, the KNH Board approved a new Tenant Involvement Strategy – 'Get Involved' which is attached at Appendix 1. The strategy highlights what tenant involvement means at KNH, the key activities it will support, the outcomes KNH seeks to achieve in partnership with our tenants, leaseholders, the Council and partners and the impact we want to achieve in our communities.

## **2. Information required to make a decision**

This section of the report summarises progress made in relation to the roll-out of the strategy and the extent to which these are aligned with the original objectives set out by the Council and KNH. The report also provides an update on how KNH is responding to the findings from the Hackitt Review post Grenfell and specifically the organisation's approach to engaging with 'residents' on fire safety related matters.

### **2.1 Reflects Best Practice**

KNH is a member of TPAS (formerly known as the Tenant Participation Advisory Service) who are recognised as the leading experts in tenant engagement ([www.tpas.org.uk/](http://www.tpas.org.uk/)). TPAS have continued to work with the organisation on the development of the new Tenant Involvement Strategy which included strengthening the role of tenants and leaseholders as part of the organisation's governance arrangements (this will be discussed in more detail later).

KNH completed a self-assessment or 'health check' in autumn 2017 based on TPAS' National Tenant Engagement Standards and aligned to the TPAS Landlord Accreditation Framework on Tenant Engagement. Feedback from the self-assessment has informed the development of the new model. KNH will also be working with TPAS to carry out a full external evaluation of the new Tenant Involvement Strategy starting in January 2020.

Over the last 18 months, the KNH Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Team and the new Tenant and Leaseholder Panel (as described later at Item 2.5) have attended a number of tenant involvement conferences and roundtable events to hear and discuss best practice in tenant engagement. The roundtable events have been of particular value as they provided an excellent opportunity for staff and panel members to discuss with their peers, the housing sector's current challenges. Colleagues from Blackpool and Coastal Housing, St Leger Homes in Doncaster and Rotherham Council have also visited KNH to share experiences of their tenant involvement journey. The overarching sector view is that approaches to engagement needs to continually evolve to remain current and meaningful to tenants.

### **2.2 Use of Technology**

The new strategy incorporates a wider menu of involvement opportunities to meet the diverse needs of nearly 22,000 KNH managed households. To extend the 'Get Involved' offer at KNH, a new digital platform was launched in October 2018 providing a range of online tools for tenants to engage with KNH staff, other tenants including via their Tenant and Resident Association (TRA) and potentially, with the KNH Board. Since December 2018, 594 logins and 284 posts have been made to the platform.

The platform can also be used by KNH staff and partners to generate discussions, comments and polls e.g. in response to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) call for evidence on good practice and how residents and landlords work together to keep their home and building safe and funding opportunities etc. The platform also provides an ideal opportunity for KNH to improve our engagement with underrepresented groups.

KNH has recently launched a new website at [www.knh.org.uk](http://www.knh.org.uk) which provides a modern, vibrant yet easy to use platform accessible to all tenants and residents to engage and communicate directly with the organisation. The new website also has a direct link to the 'Get Involved' Platform detailing opportunities and encouraging more tenants to have a voice.

## 2.3 Demonstrates Value for Money

### 2.3.1 Integrated Grant Scheme

A new Integrated Grant Scheme for TRAs was introduced as part of the new strategy. This scheme replaces previous outdated and less effective TRA and community grant programmes managed by KNH e.g. in 2017/18 only 44% of the funding available was spent at the end of the financial year. Launched last year, the new grant scheme consists of two elements; a TRA Grant of up to £500 per award to support groups with day-to-day running costs and a Social Investment Fund (SIF) of up to £2,000 per award that groups can apply for to deliver local projects that align with the Kirklees Partnership Outcomes. SIF awards are determined by the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel (TLP) (see Item 2.5). The new approach also places greater emphasis on groups securing their own and additional funding including in-kind contributions e.g. one TRA has received funding from Safer Kirklees to run youth diversionary activities aimed at addressing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

Last year, a total of 23 TRA grant applications were awarded to the value of £10,535 and 20 Social Investment Fund applications valued at £25,480. Whilst this shows an underspend of £21,985 on the 2018/19 budget (£58,000 in total), this needs to be noted in the context that the new funding arrangements did not commence until quarter 2 and therefore there were only two application windows open that year.

The Integrated Grant Scheme allows TRAs to work with other local groups and community organisations to help with the design and delivery of projects and activities on their estates. In 2018/19, the new arrangements also achieved efficiency savings of circa £50,000 as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

### 2.3.2 TRA and Community Premises Review

As part of the development of the new Tenant Involvement Strategy, KNH was also asked to review the 25 TRA and Community buildings managed on behalf of the Council and to report back with proposals for the future use of each asset. The review involves the undertaking of a detailed options appraisal for each building taking into account current usage, links with corporate priorities, running and maintenance costs, conversion costs, the availability of other community assets in the area and local housing demand where applicable. The views of Ward Members, TRAs and other key stakeholders is also taken into account.

Given the fact that 10 of the 25 buildings are former residential properties and the huge demand for social housing in Kirklees, the option to convert these back into residential use is a priority. To put this into context, as at May 2019 there were over 14,000 applicants registered on Choose n Move and, on average each week 557 Band A and B applicants (those in high priority housing need) are actively bidding for properties.

The review was put on hold during the pre-election period in 2018, however this work recommenced later that year. Progress is slower than originally anticipated, due to the complexities and individual circumstances associated with each building e.g. 8 of the buildings in scope are currently used as Polling Stations. Where this is the case, KNH remains in discussions with Electoral Services to ensure that suitable and appropriate accommodation remains available to be used in the future.

Options for the future use of the first four buildings have now been presented to the Council and will continue to be reported on a rolling programme. It is anticipated that reviews on at least 50% of the buildings (12) will be completed by the end of March 2020, including the 10 former residential premises and any other premise that becomes void. The remaining buildings will be reported to the Council by the end of March 2021.

## 2.4 Supporting Communities and Empowering Tenants

The new Strategy has a clear commitment to develop the capacity of our TRAs and CVs to do more for themselves and the communities and estates they represent. As part of the review, a health check was carried out on all TRAs last year. This work unfortunately confirmed that there were far fewer active TRAs operating than the presumed 88 groups notified to KNH when Communities Who Can (CwC) was decommissioned in September 2017. Some TRAs were no longer operating or properly constituted as a TRA and, others had only existed for a short period of time or had ceased operations but were not formally dissolved. Last year a robust exercise was undertaken with the remaining cohort of 47 active TRAs to inform a programme of training and on-going 'light support' aimed at building confidence and strengthening the capacity of these groups e.g. book-keeping, bid-writing etc.

In contrast to the reducing numbers of TRAs, KNH continues to see an increasing number of people who want to get involved as individuals rather than through a formal group. Work is ongoing to redefine and strengthen the role of Community Voices, who are now called Street Voices (SVs), to ensure these individuals can play a more active part in ensuring tenants and leaseholders have a strong voice at KNH e.g. SVs can now apply for grant funding to deliver activities that benefit a wider group of tenants or estates and have access to training and on-going 'light touch support' from KNH.

As part of the new arrangements, KNH is also supporting the Neighbourhood Forums (which replaced the former Area Forums), Surgeries and Estate Inspections which continue to offer face to face engagement opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to co-design local services influence neighbourhood plans, including as part of the Council's Place Standard engagement activities and, to help shape local housing priorities.

## 2.5 Shaping and Influencing Service Improvements

TPAS has also supported KNH to strengthen the role of tenants as part of our governance arrangements. In addition to our Tenant Board Member representatives (up to 3 places available on the Board of 9 members), KNH now has a new Tenant and Leaseholder Panel (TLP) and a Service Improvement and Challenge (SIC) Panel which form part of the organisation's governance framework.

A replacement to the previous Tenant and Resident Committees (TRCs), the TLP's role includes contributing to the development of new policies and service planning, driving improvements in services, approval of grant applications and the formal dissolution of TRAs. The TLP has now been in operation for 14 months. Six of the twelve positions on the TLP have now been appointed to, including one leaseholder. KNH continues to publicise and promote the opportunity to join the TLP.

The SIC Panel replaced the previous tenant scrutiny arrangements at KNH and is responsible for scrutinising policies and strategies, reviewing particular services and function to identify

improvements using a variety of methodologies including surveys, mystery shopping, task and finish approach, monitoring performance, customer feedback and levels of satisfaction and reviewing complaints. The SIC is independent and agrees its own work plan however, this must have relevance to KNH priorities. With support from TPAS, the first scrutiny took place during spring/summer this year on how effectively KNH deals with complaints, given the importance of having robust and transparent processes in place following Grenfell. The findings are being incorporated into the on-going review of the KNH Complaints Policy and the development of a new service charter to replace the former KNH Quality Guarantee.

Over the last 18 months, KNH has led or participated in a series of consultation and engagement events with other teams e.g. to inform KNH's Your Home, Your Place 5 Year Capital Investment Programme and with other Council Services e.g. the roll-out of the Place Standard toolkit based on the principles that underpin the new strategy which are that KNH will:

- **Listen** to what our tenants are telling us
- **Empower** tenants to engage effectively with KNH
- Ensure all tenants can **influence** key decisions
- Make sure **engagement** is planned, monitored and measurable with clear outcomes
- Use a wide and flexible range of **involvement** tools and opportunities
- Create opportunities for projects to be **delivered** utilising the strengths of tenants
- Give clear **feedback** on how we have acted upon what tenants tell us

## 2.6 Evidenced Based Outcomes

Integral to the new strategy is the ability to monitor the impact of the new arrangements and specifically, the opportunities that are created to ensure tenants can have a really strong voice, are able to influence service delivery and development and, have opportunities to develop themselves, their families and their communities. As a result, new Performance Indicators (PI's) have been developed at KNH for Tenant Involvement and are monitored on a quarterly basis which include:

- Number of households engaged in Tenant Involvement activities
- That KNH listens and acts upon the views of tenants (taken from the annual STAR Survey)
- % of Active Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) and Street Voices (SVs)
- Number of underrepresented groups involved in Tenant Involvement activities

## 2.7 Fire Safety

In the summer, the KNH Board endorsed a new Fire Safety Management Plan (FSMP) which is awaiting formal approval by the Council. The FSMP is informed by the findings from the Hackitt Review which, in addition to strengthening building regulations and compliance, recommends that landlords should have a 'resident engagement strategy' for fire safety. The FSMP is also aligned with the recommendations in the Social Housing Green Paper and the priorities set out in the Kirklees Housing Strategy 2018-23.

A Resident Engagement Framework forms part an integral part of the FSMP and sets out the organisation's approach to engaging with 'residents' on fire safety related matters. The framework describes the various channels and opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to understand, discuss and scrutinise KNH's fire safety practices and performance and will be aligned with the organisation's revised Complaints Policy and Procedures. KNH will adopt an 'every contact counts' approach to ensure conversations' on fire safety are routinely and informally discussed at every opportunity.

The framework is not designed to replace existing or individual interactions with residents but will complement existing channels available through the Tenant Involvement Strategy whilst helping to bring a more structured, transparent and robust approach to the fire safety relationship between KNH and its residents e.g.

- Tenant and Leaseholder Panel (TLP) – the FSMP is already a standard agenda item at all TLP meetings.
- Service Improvement and Challenge Panel (SIC) – the Panel will scrutinise and review customer facing elements of the FSMP
- Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) and Street Voices (SVs) - KNH will work with the groups and individuals to promote fire safety in their blocks and encourage others to do the same
- Creation of Fire Safety Champions from existing tenant groups where possible e.g. TRAs or SVs
- Use of the Tenant Involvement Digital Platform to create an interactive dedicated space targeted at residents living in 'high rise' blocks and including relevant information e.g. Fire Risk Assessments.
- Prioritising the Integrated Grant Scheme to support residents who want to deliver 'fire safety' activities targeted at the 'high rise' properties
- Provide residents with fire safety awareness training including online or e-learning opportunities, taking full advantage of the digital platform
- Use the wide range of engagement opportunities to raise awareness with residents about their obligations to maintain the safety of their flats e.g. improvements or alterations that require approval, advice on appropriate storage etc and implications for any breaches
- Development of a 'High Rise Living Residents Forum' linked to KNH's existing governance framework through the TLP and SIC to give residents a voice and ensure services meet the needs and expectations of people living in 'high rise' buildings

### **3. Implications for the Council**

#### **Working with People**

The new Tenant Involvement Strategy creates more opportunities for more local people to come together around a common purpose ensuring services are shaped by and reflect the voice of the tenant and helping to create successful communities.

#### **Working with Partners**

Working in partnership with tenants, residents, leaseholders and local services including community and voluntary groups is integral to delivering the outcomes in the Tenant Involvement Strategy.

#### **Place Based Working**

Place Based Working will continue to be aligned with the roll-out of the Tenant Involvement Strategy at KNH to maximise citizen engagement, reduce duplication of work with tenants, leaseholders and other residents living on KNH estates and, the risk of consultation fatigue across KNH communities e.g. Berry Brow

#### **Improving outcomes for children**

Implementing the strategy will allow KNH to better understand what is important to families living in KNH communities and, creates more opportunities for children to have a voice in the services that impact on their lives and their future.

## **Other (e.g. Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**

The proposals are in line with the Regulator for Social Housing Consumer Standards and, specifically, the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (TIE).

### **4. Consultees and their opinions**

Consultation was carried out on the content of the report with the Director of Neighbourhoods at KNH.

### **5. Next steps and timelines**

Will be determined following presentation of the report to the Economy & Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel on 10th October 2019.

### **6. Officer recommendations and reasons**

The contents of the report details an update on the implementation of the 'Get Involved' – KNH Tenant Involvement Strategy. This follows a request by Councillor Uppal at a briefing on 12th September for an update on tenant involvement and engagement to include recent history, current arrangements and how things such as safety issues are picked up.

### **7. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations**

Not applicable.

### **8. Contact Officer**

Michelle Anderson-Dore, Head of Partnerships, KNH - [michelle.anderson-dore@knh.org.uk](mailto:michelle.anderson-dore@knh.org.uk) or telephone: 07815 495 324.

### **9. Background Papers and History of Decisions**

KNH Board Reports detailed history of decisions made dated 20th September 2017; 13th December 2017; 21st February 2018; 28th March 2018; 12th December 2018 and 20th June 2018. Copies of the report can be made available on request.

### **10. Service Director responsible**

Joanne Bartholomew, Chief Operating Officer at KNH  
Naz Parkar, Service Director for Housing, Economy and Infrastructure