Challenging the future of Tenant Involvement

Delivered by CIH consultancy with Jon Warnock, CIH associate and independent housing advisor, this project is an opportunity for a mix of social housing organisations to work creatively together in a positive environment to challenge the sectors current perspective on involving its tenants and the pace in which it is adapting to the new commercial landscape. A chance to question traditional convention, custom and practice, the project will go on to explore the options available to achieve greater cost effectiveness, impact and accountability of tenant involvement practices by examining radical approaches from both inside and outside social housing.

Why now?
Tenant involvement has experienced a slow evolution over the last 5 years as the sector has come to the recognise that traditional forms of involvement have a tendency to be inaccessible to the majority of tenants, unrepresentative of all but a limited cohort and expensive to develop and maintain. This realisation and the emergence of the Consumer Standards within the current Regulatory Framework, along with greater flexibility to develop local approaches to involvement, have given landlords the ability to embrace the more commercial principle - that tenants are individual consumers of services and interaction and influence should be focused at an individual rather than a collective level.

As a result the drivers for tenant involvement are now shifting towards:

- Recognition of the value of ‘customer’ focused business principles mirroring the commercial (and particularly the retail) sector.
- The collection, interpretation, and application of ‘customer insight’ as the principle involvement mechanism through targeted market research, informal interaction and social media.
- Greater emphasis on evidence based decision making.
- The need to demonstrate value for money through cost benefit analysis and greater efficiency.
- Conflicting demands on resources and the temptation to divert away from tenant involvement and towards income management.
- Increasing competition from the private sector and resulting need to adopt more commercial approach to the notion of ‘customer’.
- Emergence of the Business Board approach to governance and corresponding demands on greater strategic input from tenants below ‘main board’.
- The value of social investment and community development in complimenting neighbourhood interventions.
- Increased expectations of customers as a result of increased competition.

Why you should be involved

Using the very successful ‘Working together’ model, participants will share experiences with people across the sector who have recognised the constraints of traditional tenant involvement and have embraced the need to change ahead of the sector.

Through interactive and provocative debate participants will be encouraged to challenge current practices and gain an insight into a range of techniques used by organisations that have already implemented a more commercially focussed approach to tenant involvement.

Alongside facilitating collective working, as part of this project CIH offers bespoke consultancy to participating organisations to provide relevant support on the critical path to success.
The critical path includes:

• Establishing the business case for tenant involvement
• Development of options for radical responses to commercial pressures
• Enhancement of existing involvement approach and practices
• Establishing effective relationships between tenant involvement, scrutiny and governance
• Focus on cost benefit, impact, diversity and accountability of tenant involvement as driver for the planning and targeting of resources
• Dealing with the resistance to change within the existing involved tenant community

Participants will develop an understanding of:

• The changing environment and associated drivers and the implications on tenant involvement
• Effective market research techniques and the capture and application of ‘customer insight’
• The dynamic between ‘formal’ and ‘collective’ forms of involvement with ‘casual and ‘individual”
• The range options available for refining the approach to tenant involvement
• The legislative and regulatory permissions/barriers
• Measuring Impact & Cost benefit and applying the results

Leading to conversations about:

• Evidence based decision making
• Value for money
• Marketing awareness
• Competitive edge
• Information technology and social media
• Involvement as a ‘means to an end’

The potential

The flexibility bestowed on social housing by the current regulatory framework allows organisations to develop approaches to tenant involvement that are more in-tune with balancing the needs of tenants with the principles of consumerism.

Moving away from traditional involvement practices has the potential to:

• Offer greater levels of influence to a larger number and more diverse range of tenants
• Increase the objectivity of tenant led influence through evidence based decision making
• Increase effectiveness and validity of strategic and operational responses to tenants needs and aspirations
• Increasing the efficiency and value for money of tenant involvement by targeting resources to the most effective areas

This CIH consultancy project enables the organisation to confidently create the business template for its own response, to provide all the tools required to take the crucial commercial and cultural step.

What Working together can achieve

Challenging convention, custom and practice is a cultural step and the case for doing so will need to be made. This means building the case, comparing the results and outcomes and taking ideas and business tools back to the participating organisations, to equip organisations to build a successful approach to involving its tenants.

CIH consultancy will produce a report of the project that recognises the part played by the participating organisations. Findings from the project will be shared across the industry, creating a further platform for debate.

Action learning sessions, key project elements and overall timeframes are expected to be:

Workshop 1
THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT
September 2014
• Regulation and the principles of ‘consumerism’
• The evolutionary characteristics of involvement
  • from collective to individual
  • from formal to casual
  • from representative to specialist
  • from subjective to evidence based

Workshop 2
ACHIEVING CULTURE CHANGE
October 2014
• Establishing the business case
• Corporate vision, values and competencies
• Risk management
• Reviewing/redefining the structure, strategy, systems and processes
• The internal market place
• Stakeholder involvement
• Dealing with resistance/inertia
Workshop 3
THE PRIMACY OF CUSTOMER INSIGHT
November 2014
• Understanding your customer
• Customer segmentation
• Expectations, Profile, Insight and Delivery
• Application of customer insight in strategic, operational and scrutiny decisions
• Working collaboratively to interpret data

Workshop 4
DEVELOPING A NEW APPROACH TO INVOLVEMENT
January 2015
• Re-inventing the wheel
• Examining the range of options for involvement
• Tenant scrutiny as a tool for performance management and audit
• Options for social investment
• Remuneration and incentivisation
• Information technology and social media

Workshop 5
IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT
February 2015
• Effective planning and resource allocation
• Measuring Impact and Cost Benefit
• Buy-in from customers & colleagues
• Performance measurement and service development
• Future review and appraisal

CASE STUDIES, SECTOR-WIDE REPORT, SHARED LEARNING THROUGH EVENTS, SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES
Spring 2015

With workshops, consultancy and special events with guest speakers from housing and the commercial sectors, this project is the first of its kind. It is an opportunity to create something positive that forever changes the relationship between landlords and their customers.

Is there a charge for being involved?

Each participating organisation will be asked to pay £9,750 plus VAT, inclusive of expenses, to be part of the project, payable in two instalments if appropriate.

The total charge includes:
• Attendance at five joint landlord interactive working groups (one at each stage in the project)
• Access to joint landlord troubleshooting sessions and conference calls throughout the project
• Individual consultancy days for your organisation, to a maximum of five days
• Detailed supporting documentation including action plans, toolkits and examples of current best practice materials
• Access to advice and support from the lead consultant via telephone and web Q&A
• Access to project web resource where landlords can talk to each other. Share what each other are doing and post examples; access guidance docs and general good practice info, see upcoming sessions; post

How does my organisation sign up?

We expect this pilot project will attract considerable interest. We will be closing registration on 22 August 2014 and signing organisations on a ‘first come, first served’ basis. We will finalise the project group during August. The project will start in September 2014, with the first workshop taking place at the end of the month.

For more information, or to apply to be involved in the project, contact Anna O’Halloran, Director, CIH consultancy at anna.ohalloran@cih.org or on 07912 110 078.