

BHA Scrutiny Panel Report – Tenant Participation

Prepared April 2016 and presented to Jean Gray, Operations Director.

Introduction

The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out clear standards and outcomes on what is expected from Social Landlords in Housing Activities and what they should aim to achieve.

Also, following an Annual Review visit from the Scottish Housing Regulator it was noted that BHA have scored low returns in Tenant Involvement. This, together with low satisfaction percentages in the 2014 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, gave cause for the Scrutiny Panel to decide to carry out a review of the areas of tenant participation currently available at BHA and to consider any changes or give feedback on how this may be improved. It was also an opportunity for the panel to look at other ideas on how BHA can encourage its tenants to become more involved.

As the majority of the panel consist of current tenants who are already actively involved with BHA in its Tenant Participation it was viewed that they would be in an ideal position to comment.

Before meeting with key staff the group reviewed all current methods of communication to tenants and discussed in detail the benefits and challenges each hold. Those currently used are Tenant Events, Bulletins and newsletters, estate visits, consultation exercises and adhoc surveys.

It became clear that although a number of methods and opportunities are available, there is still a low involvement rate.

Therefore, it is possible that it is not **what** BHA do to involve Tenants, it is **how** the message is communicated back to them and how BHA can improve in this area.

Methodology used

The Panel met with Julie Riley, Housing Services Manager, Julia Graham, Housing Team Leader, Colin Turner, Corporate Services Manager and Hayley Armstrong, Communications Officer.

Each of them is involved in promoting BHA and the service provided and particularly the Housing Staff have direct contact with BHA tenants on a daily basis. They discussed in detail all methods currently used and also identified new options for consideration.

Two members of the panel also reviewed both SBHA and Waverley HA Community and Tenant Engagement Strategies. The panel also hosted a visit from Eildon Scrutiny Panel as part of a networking exercise however they also discussed how Eildon focuses on Tenant Participation and involvement.

The Scrutiny Panel agreed that any feedback from tenant experiences with BHA, whether it is good or bad, should be encouraged as the tenants voice does count.

Findings and Recommendations

Point No.	Area	Scrutiny Findings/ Recommendation	Management Team Response	Scrutiny Panel Response
1	“Street per Week” programme	<p>This exercise should not only focus on housing issues but also give positive feedback to tenants.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well-kept gardens, • the opportunity to check on the welfare of tenants. 	<p>Agree – staff are now knocking on tenants doors so excellent suggestion that they are identifying good and bad etc.</p>	<p>SP are pleased to hear that this suggestion is now being done. It would be of benefit to monitor how the tenants react to staff and if this is well received. This is also an opportunity for the tenants to speak to each other, Staff safety should always be a priority.</p> <p>SP request a review in 6 months.</p>
2	Other methods of promoting BHA	<p>Consider other innovative ways to meet and engage with tenants. For example, a Pop up tent or gazebo, in different areas or villages.</p> <p>This would be a good way of getting BHA to engage with its tenants.</p> <p>It is an inexpensive option and would need to be quick</p>	<p>Currently considering the pop up gazebo, however will monitor attendance and usage</p>	<p>SP pleased to see that this suggestion is being considered, and accept the point of identifying key events at which to hold specific activities.</p> <p>Consideration should also be given to getting Emergency Services involved at larger events.</p>

		<p>and easy to assemble and dismantle.</p> <p>Offer free promotional things such as balloons, pens, face painting for children this gets the children involved and in turn will get the parents involved.</p> <p>By keeping it fun and informal this will encourage tenants to come along and chat and also be used to gather feedback on any topics, satisfaction and promote other services such as TVs, SP, Befriending and the Employability Service.</p>	<p>Unsure about the face painting all of the time, however perhaps at special events such as Duns Show this could be used.</p> <p>Happy for promotional freebies & prize draw (?)</p>	
3	Virtual Housing Assistant	It was noted that BHA is to investigate further the possibility of this being implemented on the website. This should allow tenants who work during the day and have internet access to get a quick response to any query.	Priority will be improving website first then utilise this/VHA	Agree and appreciate that the website is priority and new systems are being investigated and request that this recommendation be reviewed in 6 months.
4	Improve Customer	Once the technology is in		

	profiling	place for various methods of communication consider front line staff asking tenants directly how they would like to be contacted and by which preferred method.	Agree, however feel this should be done now to enable the correct technology to be purchased.	SP agree with MT comments and the idea pending. By addressing the Customer Profiling this should enable the technology to move forward within BHA.
5	Future tenant Events	<p>Consideration could be given to working with other agencies in joint ventures such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Sports day • Dog Shows • Reivers Weeks/Herring Queen • BHA Summer Day – one location each year, by rotating between the towns and villages of the BHA area, making accessible to all. • Tea dance • Duns Show - confirmed that BHA are to have a stand at Duns show this year. <p>This would make these</p>	Agree – this is a good idea. This is a strong area for the Tenant Volunteers to proactively engage with other agencies, and funding within the Tenant Participation Budget for this to be achieved.	<p>SP agree with the TV involvement as this would be an excellent example of working together and the TVs developing their relationship and understanding of BHA and staff.</p> <p>In relation to larger events such as dog shows the panel would also suggest that this could be judged by a special guest e.g. local vet, Local SMP or similar.</p>

		<p>events more affordable and cost effective by splitting the costs between all agencies involved.</p> <p>Likewise if other agencies are holding these events BHA could piggy back onto these.</p>		
6	Communication Channels	<p>Consider more efficient communication channels such as electronic forums, Facebook, Text Messaging, emailing, Twitter, snapchat, Instagram to promote TV and SP meetings and feedback and notification of BHA events, but having the option to target specific groups and areas as required.</p>	<p>Agree with suggestions and comments.</p>	<p>SP are pleased to see that these suggestions are being taken on board however caution should be used so not to get too diverse.</p> <p>Must link into the customer profiling to adopt correct channels.</p>
7	Phone messages	<p>Suggest that “on hold” music be changed to information giving service. Such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advertising different areas of BHA • Website direction • Tenant Volunteer Involvement • We value tenant 	<p>Agree – this is an excellent idea and should be an easy</p>	<p>SP happy to see that this is being considered and request a review in 6 months on how the service</p>

		<p>feedback.</p> <p>We appreciate that BHA do not expect callers to be left on hold for any significant time, so the message should be short, sharp and the panel would offer the suggestion of changing the automated message on a regular basis.</p>	<p>“quick fix” improvement. The music can be monotonous!</p>	<p>is received by tenants and the information provided.</p>
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Further points for consideration/recommendation –

A point to note is that tenants should not be forced into any form of digital communication if they do not wish to do so. It is essential that BHA establish and encourage tenants on how they wish to be communicated and by what method. BHA must have the systems in place to enable to do this.

The panel appreciate that BHA need to be realistic and not expect to put on too many events in one year but focus on having one or two successful events each year.

In regards to the automated message, the Scrutiny Panel would be happy to work alongside digital services to give recommendation and feedback.

BHA Tenant Volunteers should work together with staff more often regarding Tenant Participation.

The Scrutiny Panel would like to pass on their recognition to all staff for their efforts in Tenant Participation and they also note that perhaps many tenants may not wish to participate or become involved.

The Scrutiny Panel would also like to pass on their thanks to MT for their consideration and swift response to all the points above and agree with the teams suggestions above.

Trustees Comments/Feedback on the Report

Report was presented to the Board on 21 June 2016. Received extremely well and the board appreciated the Scrutiny Panel had tackled what has historically been a difficult area for BHA as a rural Housing Association and had felt the outcomes reflect what a good and thorough exercise they had done.

