



TENANCY AGREEMENT TENANT FOCUS GROUP

Tenant presentation to
Housing Management Consultative
Committee 23 September 2008



Tenancy Agreement – Tenants Focus Group

Communication with Tenants

The group – tenant representatives and officers involved in tenancy management

This Tenant Focus Group was formed by Councillor Mary Mears.

Our remit was to help produce a new tenancy agreement for Council tenants



Tenancy Agreement – Tenants Focus Group

• **Group Members**

- Tina Urqhart (West)
- Chris El-Shabba (East)
- Barry Hughes (North)
- Trish Barnard (Central)
- Chris Kift (High Rise)
- Charles Penrose (Sheltered)
- Adrian Channon (Housing Manager – Oxford Street)
- Diane Freeland (Housing Manager – Manor Place)

• **Meetings**

- 3 April 2008
- 21 April 2008
- 19 May 2008
- 14 August 2008



Tenancy Agreement – Tenants Focus Group

Main areas of discussion

- What makes a good tenancy agreement
- What is good and bad about our current agreement
- Examples of Best Practice from other local housing providers and high performing authorities (3*)
- Produce a draft agreement



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What makes a good agreement?

Clarity. Tenants should understand their obligations and rights as well as those of the Landlord.



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Our current agreement – what’s good and bad

Good

- Crystal Mark – Good use of plain language
- 4 page agreement - succinct

Bad

- Not in line with our leases – we need to reflect the clauses and spirit of the lease
- Is it too short? Does it cover the requirements in enough detail?



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Examples of good practice

- The group looked at local housing providers plus high performing authorities (3*)
- Westminster, Carrick, Derby Homes
- Southampton, Eastbourne
- Brighton & Hove City Housing (proposed draft agreement)
- Assured Short hold example from the private sector



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Examples of Good Practice

- Layout is very important . Good use of tables and sections.
- Plain language essential
- A number of authorities asked for photographs of their tenants
- Statement relating to Anti Social Behaviour and responsibility to neighbours
- Joint agreements for introductory and secure tenants
- New and tighter clauses I.e. making a false statement, clearer terms on pet ownership and untidy gardens



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Draft Agreement – what did we want?

- Set a tone of voice – engaging and welcoming. We propose ‘welcome to your new home’ whilst reminding tenants how important this document is ‘keep it safe’
- Layout and language need to be clear
- The agreement to be broken down into sections i.e. repairs and maintenance. living in your home, living with your neighbours



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Draft Agreement – what did we want?

- Keep to one agreement but highlight the differences between introductory and secure tenancies
- Link the agreement to the Tenant Handbook
- The agreement needs to be thorough enough for tenants to know their responsibilities
- Section on ending the tenancy so everyone is clear



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Other ideas/Issues for consideration

- Should we ask for photographs?
- We need to be clear on succession so all residents understand what it means. Ensure Tenant Handbook is clear.
- Ending tenancy due to the death of the tenant – 2 week rent waiver – should our policy be written into the agreement?



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Other ideas/Issues for consideration

- Floor coverings. Do we need to remove all coverings?
- Revise handbook so they compliment each other
- At the 'sign up' the agreement needs to be fully explained with key areas highlighted.



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Conclusions –Next Steps?

- Draft agreement subject to consultation with internal stakeholders
- Equality Impact Assessment to be completed in October 2008
- 28 day consultation with all tenants
- Comments considered and discussed (focus group plus officers)
- HMCC & Cabinet agree final version
- 28 day formal variation notices issues to all tenants
- Tenant Handbook to be updated
- Target implementation date April 2009.

