

Agenda Item 12

Housing Review Board

12 June 2008

SKB



Housing Review Board – Training and Development

Summary

This report explores the training and development needs of the Housing Review Board and presents the training paper produced by the Vice Chairman of the Housing Review Board. Included are details of past training undertaken by the Housing Review Board and training made available to tenants since the inception of the Board in June 2006.

The Board is invited to determine and prioritise its training needs and consider how this training is best delivered. A number of options are given in the report for members to consider.

Recommendation

That the information presented be considered by the Housing Review Board and a prioritised programme of training and development agreed.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To assist the Housing Review Board to reach its full potential.

b) Alternative Options

To take the view that sufficient training is already available.

c) Risk Considerations

The Board is not sufficiently trained to effectively advise the Executive Board on housing landlord matters, and we fail to meet the recommendations of the Audit Commission inspection of Housing that took place in 2007.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

Positive Impact Overall

Affordable Homes.

Excellent Customer Service.

The training programme would be delivered in the main by Housing or other Council staff, and has not been costed.

e) Date for Review of Decision

At the completion of an annual training programme. The Board will be invited to review each training event to ensure that the training met their needs.

1 Training and development for Board members

- 1.1 For some time the Board and individual Board members have been concerned about training and development to meet the demands and responsibilities placed upon the Housing Review Board. It has been recognised that Board member training and development will assist in good decision making and effective use of Board members time and commitment.
- 1.2 A report on training and induction was presented to your first meeting in June 2006 with an initial programme of training topics. We started a process of devoting the first part of the Board meetings to training, but as the size of the agenda increased this had to be sacrificed due to time constraints.
- 1.3 At your meeting on 10th January 2008 the Housing Review Board focussed on the results of the Audit Commission inspection and identified a need for training for Board members, with suggested topics such as 'understanding accounts and budgets'. It was agreed that Board members would advise officers as to their specific training requirements, and it was hoped that the Council's Human Resources section could turn some of these requests into appropriate training events.
- 1.4 In response to this request the Vice Chairman of the Housing Review Board has produced a paper detailing suggested training needs for the Board, which is appended along with a supporting letter from Board member Councillor Miss Ash (**Annex 1**).
- 1.5 It should be recognised that the Board can develop its knowledge and experience through training and other forms of learning. For example, it was suggested that the Board could look at sharing ideas with other councils and housing associations as a way of learning and to control costs. Mentoring with high performing housing organisations should fulfil some of the Boards development needs. Similarly the Coffee Mornings have enabled Board members to learn about housing services and tenants' problems.
- 1.6 There is a role for self-directed learning and background reading for Board members who want to read around subjects that appear on the agenda. Officers can supply or direct you to reading material. We have copies of key policy documents or can access them for you. Our Information and Analysis Officer can assist Board members on this type of learning if we advise him of your requirements.
- 1.7 The majority of reports you receive have a background section explaining the topic being considered. There is also a note of background papers which can be explored by Board members. We can circulate to Board members outside of meetings articles and reports of interest.
- 1.8 Board members learn through working on Task and Finish Fora (TaFF). These less formal working groups with a specific purpose are a mix of officers and members who work on a topic until the issues has been resolved, then report and disband. We ran a TaFF on Choice Based Lettings and are establishing one for the review of sheltered housing. Similarly, Board members involved in Service Review Groups will learn about the aspects of the Service that the group is considering. We can arrange for Board members to do some work shadowing of staff and by attending Estate Walkabouts Board members can gain knowledge and experience of estate management issues.
- 1.9 Tenant Board members learn about housing through the work of the Tenant and Leaseholder Customer Panel and participating in exercises like mystery shopping, self-assessments against Key Lines of Enquiry and being tenant inspectors.

- 1.10 To date the following training has been received by the Housing Review Board:
- Induction training including standards and corporate governance (June 2006);
 - Local authority finance and the Housing Revenue Account (August 2006);
 - Tenant Participation (March 2007);
 - Governance and the role of the Board (December 2007).
- 1.11 Details of tenant training programmes for 2006/7, 2007/8 and 2008/9 are attached (**Annex 2**). You can see that the training is wide ranging and provided that space is available I see no reason why Board members cannot attend some of these events.
- 1.12 We have an excellent Training and Development Manager who can provide training on certain topics and an in-house ICT trainer and training facility which we can make use of for specific software training and keyboard skills.
- 1.13 Taking into account the training requests received and that already provided, the Board is invited to identify what you consider to be your training and development priorities, and how you would prefer this to be delivered. I would suggest that you may wish to consider including training on the following:
- Housing finance and the Housing Revenue Account;
 - Repairs and improvements;
 - Allocations, the Housing Register and void properties;
 - Estate management;
 - Sheltered housing and housing services for older people;
 - Tenant participation and community development;
 - Housing Strategy, Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, and housing policies;
 - Governance, standards and the role of the Board;
 - Meetings etiquette, chairing meetings, presentation skills/public speaking;
 - Customer service;
 - Diversity and equality;
 - Using resources, research and statistics;
 - IT use;
 - Good practice and Key Lines of Enquiry.
- This is not an exhaustive list, merely a guide to creating a training and development programme.
- 1.14 It would be helpful if the Board could consider the different ways of providing training/learning identified in the report and give an indication of which they consider most suitable for the different topics.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications within the report.

Financial Implications

Any financial implications can be met from existing budgets.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

None

Background Papers

None