

Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentive Policy

Overview and Scrutiny Panel	26 May 2022
Report Author	Sally O’Sullivan, TLS Manager
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Jill Bayford, Cabinet Member for Housing
Status	For Information
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	All

Executive Summary:

This report invites members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to review the Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentives Policy to be adopted by Tenant and Leaseholder Services (TLS), ahead of seeking approval at Cabinet.

Recommendation(s):

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel are asked to:

1. To scrutinise the contents of the policy and the accompanying Equality Impact Assessments (EIA):
 - Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentives Policy
 - Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentives Policy EIA

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

This strategy is deliverable from the existing budget provision for the TLS Resident Involvement service.

Legal

As a registered social landlord, the council has a regulatory responsibility to ensure there are a wide range of opportunities for residents to influence services and that we understand and respond to the diverse needs of tenants. As set out in the Regulator of Social Housing’s [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard](#).

Risk Management

As a social landlord, the council is regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH). The RSH have published a Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

Without a policy setting out the reasonable expenses that the council can pay to residents participating in involvement activities, there is a significant risk that many residents, particularly those on low incomes, with disabilities or with caring responsibilities, would be excluded from participating.

Approving the expenses payments recommended by the report will help to ensure that resident involvement activities are accessible to all of the council's tenants and leaseholders.

Corporate

Our Housing and Planning Service plan describes how we contribute to the council's priorities, it tells us that our key focus is 'to ensure the provision of a high quality, cost effective service to residents'.

We know that involving residents in the design and delivery of services is a key part of achieving good services that meet the needs of our residents.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -
(Delete as appropriate)

- *To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*

The council's tenants and leaseholders include residents that have protected characteristics as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty. Each of the new policies is subject to a completed Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA), attached to this report.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- *Communities*

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.0 The Council's new tenant and leaseholder service was launched on 1 October 2020.
- 1.1 As part of the pledged service improvement, the council must provide a wide range of opportunities for residents to influence and scrutinise housing services. As set out in the Regulator of Social Housing, Consumer Standard, Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.
- 1.2 The policy we are looking for scrutiny by OSP today identifies expenses residents can be reimbursed as a result of getting involved, which we want to adopt and publish on the Council's website.

2.0 The Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentive Policy

- 2.1 Our Housing and Planning Service plan describes how we contribute to the council's priorities, it tells us that our key focus is 'to ensure the provision of a high quality, cost effective service to residents'.
- 2.2 We know that involving residents in the design and delivery of services is a key part of achieving good services that meet the needs of our residents.
- 2.3 It is vital that we listen to residents' views and are committed to supporting residents to get involved in monitoring and influencing their housing services.
- 2.4 This Policy helps break down some engagement barriers and ensures residents are reimbursed for expenses incurred as a result of getting involved. This policy identifies expenses, including:
- Travel expenses
 - Care expenses
 - Subsistence expenses e.g. food and overnight accommodation
 - Other expenses that may not be detailed within this Policy
- 2.5 The Policy also sets out how we will use incentives to maximise and engage a broader range of residents.

3.0 Consultation

- 3.1 This Policy was reviewed in partnership with the Thanet Tenants and Leaseholders Group (TTLG). Useful feedback was given to a couple of points within the policies, leading to word changes to reduce assumptions which served to enhance them.
- 3.2 TLS officers have had the opportunity to review and feed into this policy, and the final draft reviewed by the TLS senior managers.

3.3 This report has also been considered by the council's Housing Cabinet Advisory Group at its meeting on 21 April 2022 and any significant observations made by the committee will be shared with members of the cabinet prior to the decision.

4.0 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

4.1 This strategy has been subject to an EIA completed by a panel of 3 officers from the tenant and leaseholder service, together with the Resident Involvement Manager.

Contact Officer: Sally O'Sullivan, Tenant and Leaseholder Services Manager
Reporting to: Bob Porter (Director of Housing and Planning)

Annex List

Appendix 1 [Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentive Policy](#)

Appendix 2 [Equality Impact Assessment](#)

Background Papers

Corporate Consultation

Finance: *Chris Blundell (Director of Finance)*

Legal: *Estelle Culligan (Director of Law and Democracy)*