

# Approval of TLS, Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentive Policy

<b>Cabinet:</b>	16 June 2022.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Sally O'Sullivan, Tenant and Leaseholder Services Manager.
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr Jill Bayford, Cabinet Member for Housing.
<b>Status:</b>	For Decision.
<b>Classification:</b>	Unrestricted.
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes.
<b>Reasons for Key:</b>	An Executive Decision that involves the approval of the Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentives Policy to be adopted and published by the Council's Tenant and Leaseholder Services (TLS).
<b>Ward:</b>	N/A.

## Executive Summary:

This report seeks authority for the Council to adopt the Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentives Policy.

## Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Approve the adoption of the new Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentives Policy.

## Corporate Implications

### Financial and Value for Money

This Policy 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 'support residents to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment'. As set out in the Regulator of Social Housing's [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard](#).

## **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. 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.

## **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.

## **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: -

- *To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.*

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, attached to this report.

## **CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- *Communities*

### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 The Council's new Tenant and Leaseholder Service was launched on 1 October 2020.
- 1.2 As part of the pledged service improvement, the council must provide a wide range of opportunities for residents to influence and scrutinise housing services and support residents to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment. As set out in the Regulator of Social Housing, Consumer Standard, Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.
- 1.3 The Policy we are looking for approval by cabinet 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.

## **5.0 Options**

5.1 Cabinet is asked to review the Strategy annexed to this report and has the following options:

1. Agree the draft Policy as recommended.
2. Not agree with the adoption of the Policy. This option is not recommended as the Strategy delivers on the requirements that satisfy the Regulator for Social Housing for registered landlords; 'support residents to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment'.
3. Amend the Policy. This option is not recommended as the Policy has been developed by front line staff and has been the subject of consultation with the TTLG.

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**

N/A

### **Corporate Consultation**

**Finance:** Chris Blundell (Director of Finance)

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