**Tenant Networking Unconference 13 Feb 2014 Flipchart Notes**

**1. Getting People involved**

* Must have a central meeting point, people may be reluctant to travel.
* Mailshot
* Billboard advertising
* Advertise and put report of what scrutiny is doing in quarterly magazine

Incentives

* When advertising or recruiting it should be explained what “scrutiny means as younger people plus older may not understand what scrutiny is and what it does.
* When new tenants move in or tenants move in or tenants move use a re-let list and 4 – 6 weeks after move contact tenant to tell them what they can get involved with.
* Put up posters and leave leaflets in local doctors and dentists and health centres community centres, libraries, etc. “do you want to make a change? (date, time venue) on repair vans
* Don not put pressure on people.
* Ensure recognition after group have finished work.

**2. Value for Money**

* Mergers & groups – do they deliver VFM – how can scrutiny engage?
* VFM focus group of tenants
* VFM – Prove it?
  + Tenants can help to find out
  + Ask how & why?
* Takes a long time for people to knit together & understand
  + Mutually what VF is
* Welfare Reform – Food banks etc run by volunteers
* Quality & cost
* Need to explain it to tenants
* Is cash king? Negotiation
* How do we keep tenants in the know about Brighthouse etc
* Tenants need to understand credit union
* VFM
  + Tenants were consulted at WCH at the consultation (15)
  + Was a x section of tenants – now involved tenants were invited
  + Open meetings
  + Had some VFM training & refresher
  + We were given the statement & asked for feedback
  + Our feedback was taken on board
* Examples of VFM (or not)
  + Poor components – don’t last
  + Returned repair visits
  + Good procurement & contractors & quality of good & price
  + Don’t buy cheap – it won’t last
  + Tenancy support is valuable to tenants & to landlords
  + Always mentioned – part of the culture
  + First time fix
  + Buy in bulk & review stock held on vans
    - Save transport costs
    - Fuel & vehicle trackers/drive
    - Measure Number of calls
  + Fill up less popular stock and free up houses - offer viewing and open days of sheltered services
  + LA cuts – how do HA’s help to fill the gap – PGHT are taking on some cleaning & gardening

**3. Welfare Reform**

Services delivered from the rent money:

* do apprenticeships cooking classes – saving money/young mums & digital inclusion
* newsletter get to know everything like employment which we do
* tenants are very interested in the employment & reconditioned computers
* clothing alterations – expensive to buy new one and not able to alter themselves
* schools not encouraging VFM e.g. cooking – burden of families to teach but not all are able to
* parents unaware of how to cook - not passing on VFM skills
* struggle with budgeting – no budgeting skills
* VFM is individual – what is important to me?
* More/better education is vital
  + Instruction leaflets
  + Go round schools
* Encourage tenant participation is VFM schemes
* Get whole community involved – community schemes and demonstrations
* Efficient use of community land – waste land
* Improve individual and community confidence to ensure involvement – education
* Raise awareness of money saving tips
* Cookery demo at tenant conference
* Education not limited to schools

Digital Involvement

* Local facilities – encourage access
* Support for users
* Need co-operation with head teachers

Tenant engagement

* VFM group – regular meetings
* Have VFM manager
* How to encourage tenant involvement?
* Show practical benefits and examples
* Advertise
  + Tenant magazine
  + Rent office
  + Officers must promote
* Bring a friend – moral support – word of mouth
* Must maintain tenant interest
* No cost to tenant – expenses – refreshments
* Practical involvements
* Give tenant something to relate to – what is in it for me?
* Branding important
* Haw to get people to come back? – bring a friend
* Varity of things e.g. cooking , keep fit
* Young people difficult to reach
  + Need to change when people are in school
  + Easier to educational at a young age
* Social Media – e.g. twitter/Facebook/YouTube
  + Use social media to engage hard to reach groups e.g. example family making changes on YouTube and people/residents can follow progress and will encourage them to change
  + Peer pressure discourages involvements – young people can’t relate to the organiser/facilitator/housing association
* Young people lack direction – need guidance
* No consistency e.g. children see parents using ready meals
* Lack of self-esteem in own skills – people need encouragement
* Don’t realise they can have fun e.g. cooking can be fun, not a chore
* Change must start at home

**4. Sharing out the work**

What does your scrutiny panel do now?

* Halton –work out people’s strengths – by 1 – 1’s. Then share work out that best suits them. Use reflective log – this self-evaluates & use then for improvement. Match strengths.
* Erimus – co-ordinator splits the whole scrutiny projects into tasks
* Vela – scrutiny panel delegate tasks to others to do hands on work- VIPS
* Halton – use tenant inspectors and bring in experts from other business as co-optee’s
* Southway – 8 people volunteer for tasks within the scrutiny project + mentor support
* Fabrick – experienced things being missed so now need to keep data in 1 place + start report early
* Things needed – how do we allocate the tasks@ - what support is there for customers
* People may benefit from formal qualifications
* Administrative support given by the company is important + needed by scrutiny panels
* Process for data requests should be recorded + formally requested

Improvement Suggested:

* Halton – review after each scrutiny piece. Don’t have people designated as only doing I thing or having I specialism – succession planning.
* Fabrick - Tenants to volunteer info – that the company can’t ask or get give the panel
* Advertisement for volunteers – more promoted. All are volunteers but looking at rewards for volunteers. Incentives? £180/year internet laptop allowance – Halton £30/year Southway
* Halton/Southway – Tenant scrutiny has own budget £5k
* Fabrick/Vela – out of pocket expenses only
* Halton – have own office
* Do you commission staff to do any of the scrutiny work? Halton – data only
* Vela CSC staff support with telephone interviews
* Halton – workshops/forums. Don’t use company buildings - staff support these – notes/org – etc.

**5. Involving Young People**

* Use other community groups i.e. local/auth. Youth groups NHS/Health
* Specific young person’s officer – intergenerational work
* Use social media
* Involve young people in established groups like – lunch clubs – sheltered schemes
* Communicate in a way they will respond i.e. mail, text
* Pre-tenancy course
  + what to expect
  + Their respect as a tenant
  + Signposting
* Make engagement interesting/meaningful
* Incentives – accredited training – leisure pass
* Try to do family events
* Involve staff(young) in surveys etc/development
* Have more properties available to young people
* Education in what available to them, e.g. credit unions, smarter buys money advice.
* Be flexible on meeting times, how we meet, does not always have to be a meeting
* Use other venues. i.e. bowling/pizza hut
* The language used/wording
* Copy what works. i.e. college posters McDonalds – Customer feedback, Youth Clubs
* Ask them what they want!
  + Talk to them
  + They don’t bite!
* Get them to organise their own event/give them responsibility (do a mock run of this/email quest to you be asking suppliers etc)

**6. Mentoring & Training**

* Need to identify skills gap within your panel
* Scrutiny has very different skills compared to traditional Customer Involvement approaches, e.g. chairing meetings, presentation skills – interviewing, reviewing focus, surveying groups
* Needs
  + TOR for every ci group (inc scrutiny)
  + Training needs analysis of each involved customer (90)
  + Planned year in advance
  + Each customer gets a calendar of then training a year in advance
  + Variety of training providers
  + Officers train the trainer courses so they can deliver – good VFM
  + Jan – march, source providers/1-1s/produce programme

Trafford Hall

* + Used a lot well thought of
  + Closing for NW tenants
  + But not tailored to your org
  + Needs to be part of your approach

Courses

* + Data protection
  + HAs
  + Customer service – general
  + Running a focus group
  + Phone surveys
  + Listening & recording info
  + Writing reports
  + What is scrutiny? ( new members)
  + Mystery shopping
  + Tenant inspection
  + Interviewing skills
  + How to carry a desktop review
* Mentoring
* Merger of Wythenshawe HAs
  + Mentoring of 14 key tenants with senior managers (about to start)
  + Used an independent consultant to train 2 parties separately & bring both together
  + 12 months in duration (1/4ly meeting for 2 hrs.)
  + Gain a wider understanding of broad areas within the company
  + Aim to roll out to ALL involved customers if successful
* Mentoring of now recruitments to scrutiny not happing round our table but all agree it’s a good idea
* Recruiting
  + Via internet/ websites
  + Scrutiny takes time, so does training can be difficult for people of working age – job seeking come first
  + Survey club of 20-30 people (bit repetitive same views)

**7. Getting the right skills**

* Start at the beginning – explaining the basics
* Training courses – building confidence/expertise
* What are the right skills?
  + Communication skills
  + Knowledge of Housing law/Basic knowledge
  + IT skills
  + Need an interest
* Getting the right people
* Skills
  + Outspoken/opinionated
  + Care about community
  + Listening skills
  + Nosey
  + Analytical
* Access to the right people to get the info needed
* Willingness to develop – links to building confidence/skills
* Mentoring
* Needs to have an interest
* VFM
* Debating skills – to get your point across
* Personal confidence
* Scrutiny builds confidence
* Independent (transparency) mentor – someone who can be contacted
* Having a network of scrutiny panels – builds on skills – more opinions
* A variety of personalities, experiences, backgrounds – then build upon skills
* Word of mouth –learn from others
* Enthusiasm
* Team Work
* Tactful
* Who you know not what you know
* Applying information
* Awareness of personal limits/failings
* SWOT Analysis
* Willingness to listen to others opinions
* Interpretation – different people interpret situations/comments documents differently
* Patience

**8. Welfare Reform**

* Specialised officers
* Working with LA – to agree how DHP is paid – knowing who can pay v those who refuse to pay
* Contact every tenant – check rent
* Officers using chip & pin machines to collect arrears
* Tenant panels should be involvement in this
* U/credit – is working in simplifying benefit system – Govt passing buck to landlord
* Possibility to introduce – reward scheme
  + For:
    - Encourage good behaviour in properties
  + Against
    - Reward those who would pay anyway
    - Cost
* Welfare reform is having an impact on evictions i.e. increase
* Affordability test
* Possible introduce a bond scheme
* Impact is high on young people
* Reclassification – loss of income – reduce lending

**9. Budget**

* (7k)GG April 14 – have a budget, but only just know what it is
* Vela – don’t have a designated budget
* Fabrick – within the CI budget, Panel don’t know the amount
* GGHT – budget update every month – new - Don’t forward plan yet

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes | No |
| 1. Training 2. Transport costs 3. Laptop & broadband (1/2 for existing donate for new users or all) 4. Stationary e.g. paper/print cartridges 5. Conferences – like this one 6. Benchmarking visitors 7. In-kind rewards (meal out often each piece of scrutiny) 8. Dedicated room 9. Catering for meetings 10. Recruitment events – e.g. for young people advertising/PR | Payment to scrutiny Panel members may affect benefits/may attracts wrong people  Issue: other involved customers who give as much time as scrutineers could argue deserve these resources? |

In an ideal world:

Scrutiny group + support staff

-> plan in advance your budget for following year

->scrutiny group monitor the spend

->manage budget in line with VFM

End of year assessment

Pass on saving/report to board to show VFM and efficiencies saving:

* In-house training
* Use your own staff
* Shared training with other scrutiny groups
* Joint procurement of hardware from consortia of scrutiny groups
* Special offers – freebies

Ideas

* The scrutiny panel should take ownership of their own budget and should decide their own priorities.
* If the panel manages their own budget they are not dependent on resident involvement officers.
* The panel may find that having their own budget limits their activities.
* From April 2014 GGHT scrutiny panel will be managing their own budget.
* Peaks and Plains request funds from the customer involvement budget. They have found this has worked well so far. Southway Homes also do this.
* There is an argument that the panel shouldn’t set a budget if it will affect leaseholders as leaseholders are also service users. Should leaseholders to be allowed on the panel?
* Do the panel have the right skills to manage their own budget?
* Does managing the budget make the panel feel more independent or more empowered?  This is a hard question to answer without having practical experience of managing the budget.
* A disadvantage of managing the budget is that it is a lot of responsibility.

**10. Tenant’s Reaction to Scrutiny**

* Tenant’s don’t realise it is for their benefit
* Suspicious
* Apprehensive
* A view that tenants doing officers job – should officers be reviewing? Bias!?
* Positive comments after reviews
* How are residents told about? – different methods needed
* Who should tell residents? – officers & residents
* Explaining skills to people
* Lack of understanding

Ways we can engage:

* Staff & residents both need the knowledge
* Promote through events & social media
* Chair needs to respected within the group/by residents
* Opportunity of co-ordinators/different roles
* Coffee morning for involved residents to share experiences
* Any staff with customer contract

**11. How independent can scrutiny be?**

* Should be able to meet wherever they want
* Should be able to decide their own agenda
* Should be able to choose scrutiny topics
* Should they have direct access to staff during scrutiny work?
* Are they presented with staff flow charts to pick who they want to speak to?
* Should they have option of writing their own report & minutes?
* Making sure they can get the info & docs @ level they require
* Making sure the recommendations are implemented

**12. Future Prospects for Scrutiny**

In 5 years what will scrutiny look like?

* Include leaseholders
* It should def. be still around
* There should be more people doing it
* Could have more resources ICT + put in
* Better recognition from the business
* More equality – les ‘them n us’
* Better representation
* Mergers & groups may impact + cause scrutiny to be group function?
* Review scrutiny + revisit past reviews (VFM)
* Tight scopes for projects

Future Prospects

* More emphasis on VFM
* Allow rest periods – try rolling programme/pool of people
* People are passionate + will want to make a change so scrutiny will still exist + even improve as people will learn from each other
* Improved learning & support
* Should still be voluntary (unpaid)
* Scrutiny shouldn’t be called scrutiny – puts people off
* (Challenge/improve etc.)@Future panel@ curiosity be answerable
* Southway stories – improving communications about achievements
* Succession planning (waiting list)

**13. What do you get from scrutiny?**

* Power – gives tenant’s a voice + the power to change things
* Giving something back
* Positive experiences
* Sometimes negative – people don’t always understand the function of scrutiny – prying in their job – can be dealt with by high level staff discussing it with staff
* Need effective communication with staff
* Approved by managers then committee + then board
* Enjoy scrutiny as get more involved – utilise other tenant groups – work together + co-operate for the common aim
* Scrutiny is good idea + effective
* A lot of HA’s are a business + look at things on paper whereas tenants live in community that services are affecting
* Hold them to account + keep them on toes
* Impact on services for the better
* Every 6 months review + check improvements have been made
* Involvement with officers + have a better insight into process
* Sense of personal achievement
* VFM when scrutinising
* V. good working relationship with resident involvement team
* Expectations of scrutiny? – daunting at 1st
* Didn’t know what to get out of it, as is new ground but really enjoy it, tenant led + get good insight into business
* Good team made all difference
* New – only 12 months since gone into group structure
* Future expectations?
* 2 separate groups initially but having some problems
* Scrutiny group will continue to develop & improve company services + VFM
* New company with new policies need to make sure carry through
* Regular training improving still sets. Can always learn more can chose depth of scrutiny in control of that

**14. Giving Tenants Time off**

There’s more to life than scrutiny!

Issues:

* Officer support
* Multiple panels
* Getting roped in (to everything)
* Intensity of scrutiny -> multiply per year
* Intensity of activity
* Too few people delivering the review
* Heavy emphasis on chairs workloads
* Difficulty in recruiting to scrutiny

Solutions

* Create a core group of scrutineers. 12- 14. 6 at a time
* No target on number of scrutiny subjects per year
* Spread out activity
* Explore different recruitment techniques
* Limit on numbers of panels

**15.** **Planning Tasks**

Scoping meeting – produce scope

Assign tasks to panel members –match tasks to people with the right skills

Compile questions in advance

1. Scope (these are in no particular logical order)
   * Presentation on topic from Head of Department
   * Policy review
   * Set up interviews with staff & tenants
   * Mystery shopping
   * Onsite visits/inspections
   * Benchmarking info
   * Performance data
   * Customer satisfaction (surveys)
   * Agree information required
   * Set objectives
   * Telephone surveys
   * When will tasks be done – timetable
   * Gather evidence
   * Reconvene as full panel to review facts
   * Consider time of year (holidays!)
   * Set target/deadlines to complete tasks & produce report
   * Present report & recommendations to (some to officers 1st) Board or committee
   * Action plan should be developed by landlord
   * Monitor actions
   * Communication is key
   * Regular catch-up or review meetings to ensure everyone is up to speed
   * Make sure officers know what info is required by panel to prevent info overload or gaps!
   * Action plan must have targets

Points of feedback

1. Hold a scoping meeting & if assigning tasks to individuals ensure they have the right skill, tools & confidence
2. Very important to consider the time of year of the scrutiny review – officers or panel members being on leave can delay the process