



## **Resident Senate Linkages Project - twelve month review**

### **A. Project purposes and extent to which these were met**

A.1 The main aim of this project was to establish clear, workable links for two-way communication between the Senate and the following groups:

- The Board and Relevant Committees;
- Severnside's Senior Management . the Executive Team (MET+);
- The main Resident Groups . Customer Panel and Resident Inspectors;

and to start to establish links between the Senate and other wider resident groups.

A.2 This was in order to strengthen the ways in which residents can shape and influence Severnside on important matters, with the Senate being a bridge between residents and the Board / senior management.

A.3 For the most part, the purposes of the project have been largely achieved. The main scope for further improvement is in the links between the Senate and other resident groups.

### **B. What has worked well**

#### **B.1 Board Links**

The Senate feels that links with the Board and the Audit and Risk Committee are working well, which it feels is of key importance given there are currently no residents on the Board. Of particular mention are the following:

- The sharing of Board agendas and Board Minutes with the Senate;
- Resident input on key decisions via Green Papers;
- Having a regular slot on each other's agendas;
- Having some shared training and being invited to participate in some Board Away Days;
- Having a Board Director on the Senate acting as a key to these links;
- A Senate member being a link member+for the Audit and Risk Committee to attend the meetings and being invited to participate in the Committee discussion where appropriate.

## **B.2 ET links**

The links between the Senate and ET are working well, as members of each team have got to know each other over the last twelve months. This has helped enable Senate members to know who to approach about different areas and to have the confidence to do so.

## **B.3 Links with other Resident Groups**

Whilst many positive links have been made between Senate and other resident groups, this is the area the Senate feels that most improvement is still needed.

Things that have worked well include:

- Senate receiving Minutes of Customer Panel meetings;
- A Senate member (Dawn) attending each Customer Panel meeting to provide a monthly update and feedback on Senate work. This provides a valued opportunity for members of the Customer Panel to have regular contact with the Senate; to discuss the monthly report from the Senate and raise any issues which are important to tenants; to have transparency and a mutual understanding of the roles of both groups; and an opportunity for frank, open, two-way discussions. This has led to a good working relationship between the Senate and Customer Panel;
- Postcards to the Senate as a way of customer panel members asking questions or raising issues they wish the Senate to respond to;
- Resident Inspectors . a successful and organised group - sharing their excellent reports with the Senate and having a Resident Inspector come to Senate meetings to provide an update on the work they have been doing;
- Senate members links with national groups which enables sharing of good practice ideas as well as to maintain a national view of key issues facing housing associations and their tenants.

## **C. Recommendations for future**

Whilst the links between Senate and Board and ET have developed very positively over the past twelve months, Senate feels that there is a need for further improvement, particularly with the links with the wider resident groups / members of A-Star and, going forward, links with other members of staff to enable greater understanding on both parts. Recommendations for future:

1. Abolish the rule which prevents Senate members and Resident Inspectors from also being members of Customer Panel which we believe was never implemented for Resident Inspectors; the role of an observer has been unworkable; and separating the groups prevents the free exchange of information leading to silo working;

2. Develop meaningful links with wider resident groups (through effective reporting) which enable Senate to identify any common themes or issues and allows Senate to communicate with these groups as appropriate;
3. Put into place effective ways for Senate and staff more generally to engage with residents, conduct surveys etc with residents who have expressed an interest in particular issues and are on the A-Star register;
4. Increase the number of involved residents across all groups . consider appointing a member of staff /team just dedicated to resident involvement; see if ideas from housing associations with high percentages of resident involvement could work at Severnside;
5. Develop capacity of residents within the groups to enable them to have greater empowerment and be less directed by staff;
6. Have a half-hour slot on a future Board Away Day to allow Senate and Board to discuss priorities for the Senate including the list of strategies coming up over the coming year and ideas for projects;
7. Continue with some joint Board and Senate training and Away Days (where appropriate), with as much notice as possible of the dates and times of these;
8. Senate to ask Resident Inspectors to carry out more work for the Senate;
9. Senate to meet and develop links with other similar resident groups, eg those at Helena Homes, Salix, New Charter