



CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The service provided by Three Rivers is becoming increasingly diverse with a wide range of customers now benefiting from the services we provide. This Strategy sets out how we will continue to improve these services in line with the wishes of our customers, stakeholders and partners through extensive consultation and involvement. In doing this, the Strategy highlights where we need to challenge our existing consultation mechanisms, while identifying new ways of involving our customers. In delivering the Strategy it is intended that we will not only create opportunities through which customers can take greater control and ownership of the consultation process, but can also help shape the services we will provide in future.
- 1.2 To support many of the activities detailed within this Strategy, Three Rivers also has a Community Development Plan which provides information on how we will work with other agencies to maximise the positive outputs of our customer involvement work.
- 1.3 The Strategy is presented to focus on the following areas:
- Corporate context
 - External guidance
 - Strategic aims
 - Who are our Customers?
 - Involvement activity
 - Action Plan
 - Appendix – Key consultation results from Customer Satisfaction surveys, staff and RAG consultation
- 1.4 Three Rivers will work with 4 Housing Group to meet the expectations of the Group and support Berwick Borough Housing in respect of Customer Involvement.

2.0 CORPORATE CONTEXT

2.1 Three Rivers places great emphasis on listening to our customers and placing their views at the heart of the organisation and the services we provide. This is illustrated by the following corporate commitments:-

2.2 Our Corporate Plan 2006-09 sets the following statement of purpose:-

'Three Rivers Housing Group operates in the North East and aims to provide good quality, affordable homes, housing support and customer-centred services in neighbourhoods where people want to live.'

This is supported by seven corporate aims, one of which is:-

'To be a customer focused organisation which provides homes and related services that recognise the changing social and demographic environment and the diverse needs of the North East. We will do this by continually improving our service delivery and encouraging a listening and learning culture.'

3.0 EXTERNAL GUIDANCE

3.1 Most external guidance is restricted to consultation and involvement with residents rather than other customers. The publication 'People First: delivering change through involvement' published in May 2007 sets out the Housing Corporation's expectations. It acknowledges that there is a role for wider community involvement but still retains resident involvement as the focus of its expectations. It states that housing associations should embrace involvement as an integral part of their business process and direct it towards achieving positive outcomes. Housing Associations that do not meet Housing Corporation standards for resident involvement will face a range of penalties from instructing associations to put minor improvements into practice, through continuing regulation and intervention, to enforced supervision.

3.2 The Housing Corporation circular 05/07: 'requirements in relation to resident involvement' was published in May 2007 to set out the regulatory requirements arising from the People First: Delivering Change Through Involvement policy. It sets out the continued expectations that housing associations will produce and publish clear resident involvement statements and review the statement using impact assessments, and that associations will have at least one resident board member on each board or committee with a service delivery remit. In addition it states that the Housing Corporation expects housing associations to adopt the new policy and agree an action plan with targets to address the requirements within it. Where work is required to meet the requirements of the policy this is incorporated into the action plan at the end of this strategy.

3.3 Further direction is given in the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code. This sets out the fundamental obligations of housing associations in meeting the Corporation's regulatory requirements. In relation to resident consultation and involvement, it states the following:

Housing associations must seek and be responsive to residents' views and priorities:

- *reflecting these interests in their business strategy*
- *giving residents and other stakeholders opportunities to comment on their performance*
- *enabling residents to play their part in decision making*
- *providing opportunities for residents to explore, and play their part in how services are managed and provided.*

3.3 The Regulatory Code goes further, by stating that Associations must show how they:-

- *Involve residents in planning, monitoring, and reviewing how services are delivered and in setting and checking service standards*
- *Take residents' views and 'wants' into account when making decisions and setting targets*
- *Introduce a range of ways of consulting and involving residents locally*
- *Give feedback to residents about what has happened as a result of their involvement*
- *Deal with complaints and show residents how problems are tackled and lessons learnt*
- *Give funding and set up training programmes to support residents' involvement*
- *Encourage more resident involvement in the investment that housing associations are making in social housing to promote the wellbeing of local communities*
- *Record satisfaction levels from residents and compare them with similar organisations*
- *Give residents as great an opportunity as possible to take control of local services, if they want to and when this is suitable*
- *Make sure that all people have equal opportunities to take part in resident involvement*

3.4 We have used the Regulatory Code as the basis of this Customer Involvement Strategy both in terms of current performance levels and the actions that are needed to bring about further improvements.

3.5 In addition, Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) produced by the Housing Inspectorate provide a framework through which Housing Associations' services can be viewed and assessed. The specific KLOE's in relation to Resident Involvement have also been reviewed in developing this Customer Involvement Strategy.

4.0 CUSTOMER AND STAFF LIAISON

4.1 In addition to the external guidance on the scope of the Customer Involvement Strategy, consultation has also been carried out in the review of this document with staff and Resident Advisory Group members. Their views are reflected in

the Strategy and Action Plan. A summary of the consultation is provided at the end of the Strategy.

STRATEGIC AIMS

4.1 In terms of customer involvement & consultation, our strategic aims are as follows:-

Aim 1 - To provide opportunities for customers to influence the **policy making and business planning** process of Three Rivers

Aim 2 - To establish a range of flexible systems to enable individuals, groups and communities to be involved in **designing, delivery and evaluation of services**

Aim 3 - To seek to deliver a personalised and **responsive service** to all customers and provide an effective **complaints policy** for those unhappy with the service provided by Three Rivers

Aim 4 - To promote, encourage and support **initiatives that provide benefits for the communities** that Three Rivers serve, ensuring the provision of sufficient resources, finance, training and expertise to support the work and activities undertaken

Aim 5 - To establish **effective communication** and consultation with all customers to provide them with **information, advice and assistance** on issues and changes that affect their home, environment or personal circumstances

Aim 6 - To seek to ensure **equal treatment for all** in the implementation of the involvement policy irrespective of ethnic origin, colour, religion, gender, age or disability and to allow for diversity within the implementation of the strategy

Aim 7- To effectively **monitor and evaluate** the impact of the Customer Involvement Strategy upon communities, service provision and individuals

4.2 The Customer Involvement Strategy forms an essential part of meeting these strategic aims. It reviews our approach to involving all the customers that benefit from our services. A starting point should, therefore, be to establish who our customers are, before going on to consider our current activity and proposals for the future.

5.0 WHO ARE OUR CUSTOMERS?

5.1 Three Rivers' customers generally come from the following groups:

- Tenants
- Residents

- Housing applicants
- Supported housing clients
- Contractors & consultants
- Care & Repair Clients
- Leaseholders

5.2 The Strategy, therefore, sets out our current activity in relation to involving these groups and how we intend to make further improvements in future. In addition, it is imperative that within these groups there is equal opportunity for all our customers, and all sections of the community, to have access to the service we provide. This also forms an important part of the strategy.

6.0 INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY

6.1 The following activity is undertaken by the Association to involve our customers in the service we provide. This activity has been broken down into the Strategic Aims detailed earlier:

Aim 1 - Policy making and business planning

This aim will be supported through:-

- **Tenants on the Board** - There are two tenant positions on the Board with full member status. These provide for a tenants perspective on strategic and management decisions. One position is filled via open advertisement, the other through a nomination from the Residents Advisory Group.
- **Residents Advisory Group** - This committee provides guidance on a range of policy and business issues affecting the operation and management of the Association. These comments are reported to the Board. RAG members are keen to work alongside other residents and officers in improving consultation and involvement opportunities through delivery of this Strategy and they have been consulted on this review.

The RAG has a detailed work plan which ties into the Board workplan and is reviewed on an annual basis. Over the past year areas covered by this work plan include:-

- Independent Living Service
- Promotion of Local Management Agreements for the delivery of local Services
- Review of the success of the expanded DLO team
- Development of the 2007 Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Review of proposed standard property type
- Development of the Customer Profiling Survey

In addition the RAG has been heavily involved in the Berwick Borough Housing stock Transfer process.

Membership of the RAG has significantly increased during the past 12 months following a recruitment drive. However, it is still not representative of the TRHA customer base. Whilst work will continue to promote membership to customer groups who are not represented, there is also a recognition that this type of involvement is not for everyone and emphasis should be put on ensuring customers have access to the involvement activities that suit them.

- **Leaseholder Forum** – To reflect the growing numbers of leaseholders amongst Three Rivers' customers it is proposed that a dedicated leaseholder forum should be developed. The format and remit of this group will be decided in partnership with those Leaseholders who are interested in participating. Through this forum we will then establish the most effective approach to ensuring that all leaseholders have access to appropriate means of involvement.
- **Residents Conference** – The annual residents' conference gives customers the opportunity to meet the Board and senior officers to discuss performance, consult on future business and financial plans and to address tenant issues. It also promotes community cohesion by bringing residents together for a social event. The conference has been improved by an awards ceremony with presentations to those residents that have been recognised as contributing to their local community, a celebrity guest speaker and a venue of a local football stadium. These initiatives have all helped to boost attendance and a similar format will be followed in future.
- **Focus Groups** – Focus Groups have been used to review key service delivery areas and to inform reports to the Board by bringing together residents from across Three Rivers stock. In the past, this method of consultation has proved relatively successful in helping to review areas such as landscaping, lettings policy, disabled development standards and consultation on planned maintenance choices.

Interest from tenants in participating in these groups has declined and whilst they will remain as a potential method of involvement, it is recognised that other, more innovative forms of consultation may be more productive.

- **Customer Involvement Panel** - This Group enables customers who do not want to attend meetings to be consulted on issues on a more ad-hoc basis via telephone, e-mail or post. Active use of the panel has lapsed due to a lack of responses to recent questionnaires and lack of significant specific issues to consult on. A web based survey site is being investigated as a preferred method of consultation.

- **Care & Repair Advisory Committees** – These committees comprise customer representatives, voluntary groups, Local Authority Housing, Social Services and Supporting People partners, and direct the focus of local Care & Repair services following consideration of customer feedback and related performance information.
- **Business Planning** – Our Corporate Plan provides clear direction that guides our whole business planning structure. The views of tenants feed directly into this structure through the range of consultation methods outlined within this strategy. Indeed, many of the key priorities within the Service Improvement Plan have been developed in direct response to comments received from tenants during the consultation methods outlined above, for example, improved services to leaseholders. In turn, these service priorities meet our Corporate Plan aims and objectives.
- **Procurement** – Two tenant representatives are included within the selection panel for appointing external contractors to undertake planned improvements within a serial maintenance contract.
- **Sharing technical expertise** – there is considerable liaison and joint working between Three Rivers and business customers to ensure that knowledge is shared and high standards are maintained in relation to new developments and service improvement.

Aim 2 - Involving customers in the design, delivery and evaluation of services

This aim will be supported through:-

- **Surveys** – A major customer satisfaction survey is carried out every 2 years. The survey collects information on customer satisfaction rates with services and identifies areas where improvements are required. Results are reported to the Board with, where applicable, specific recommendations on service improvement. Results of the 2007 survey are referred to later in this Strategy.

In 2007 in addition to the General Housing survey, leasehold customers were surveyed for the first time in a separate survey reflecting the different services delivered.

When the major survey was carried out in 2005, Supported Housing customers were also surveyed using a separate survey. However this was not repeated in 2007 as whilst it provided Three Rivers with excellent satisfaction level data, it was not felt that it was an effective way of identifying where further improvement work could be carried out. More effective methods of consultation with supported housing customers are identified in the separate Care and Support customer involvement strategy.

A number of smaller satisfaction surveys are also carried out on a continuous basis. These include:

- Repairs - for every repair undertaken, to gauge the quality of the service delivered from reporting a repair through to the work being completed
- New tenants - for every new tenant to gauge the quality of service and accommodation provided from making an application through to signing up for a tenancy
- Officer visits - to gauge the quality of service delivered to customers when an officer visits their home
- New developments - to gauge the satisfaction of tenants with the new home that they have moved into.
- Tenancy termination - to gauge the satisfaction of tenants leaving our accommodation and to analyse their reason for leaving
- Care & Repair – to gauge the satisfaction of residents with the adaptations in their home and the overall service they received from 'Care & Repair'

Our experience suggests that this should be the limit of surveys as a means of gathering views and information from customers. Further surveys could prove counter-productive to the overall consultation process.

- **Service Standards** – The cost implications of different service levels are made available to residents in order for them to make an informed decision about the service they would like to receive. This has most recently been used for landscaping services. A detailed breakdown of all service charges is provided to tenants receiving such services. More generally, the Annual Report provides details for all tenants of how each £1 of rental income is allocated to services. The Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code requires that residents are given as great an opportunity as possible to take control of local services, if they want to and when this is suitable. Three Rivers work to date in this area has not resulted in any schemes where residents have opted to take a greater control of services. However we will continue to ensure that Residents Groups have access to the necessary information to highlight how different service standards and options would impact upon our rental income requirements.
- **Residents Groups** – A number of residents groups and associations are in place with which issues can be addressed. Groups include:
 - The Limes Residents Association
 - Union Court Residents Association
 - Sherburn Road Residents Group
 - Brandon Residents Association
 - Pallion Park Residents Group
 - New Durham Road Residents Association
 - The Crofts residents Association
 - Burbank Residents Association
 - Stanhope Residents Association

Three Rivers supports the establishment of new residents groups through a dedicated community development resource. The supports all aspects of setting up a new group from finding suitable meeting space through setting terms of reference to identifying and facilitating any training that group members may need to operate effectively.

Support is also provided to established groups in providing or facilitating access to the knowledge, information and resources they require to effectively work towards their aims.

Residents groups provide a focal point for discussions on the level, scope and degree of influence and control that individual communities would like to have over the provision and management of local services within their area.

- **Regeneration Groups** - These groups have been established in areas where regeneration work has been undertaken. They enable us to involve and consult with local communities on a range of issues including housing, services, crime and employment, while giving local people the opportunity to influence the future plans for their community. Most recently, such groups have been established at:-
 - Ferryhill Station
 - Dean Bank
 - Hartlepool
 - Sherburn Road
- **One Voice** – One Voice is an initiative particularly targeted towards our more rural areas or where there is insufficient interest in forming a local residents group. It brings together individual residents to consider issues of shared interest.
- **Maintenance Consultation** - Where planned or cyclical maintenance is due to be undertaken, local residents are consulted on the work and timetable either through local meetings or individual visits. Wherever possible, tenants are provided with choice in finishing and design, especially if this work is concerned with replacement of kitchens, bathrooms and windows and doors. It is estimated that this consultation impacts upon 200 customers per year. In terms of landscaping, tenants have been provided with the cost and service charge implications of different levels of service in order to make informed decisions about the service they wish to receive.
- **Development Consultation** – Consultation with individuals and communities continues throughout the development process and is dictated by the nature of the development. Where tenants are pre-allocated to a scheme, a range of tenants choice is offered on kitchen, bathroom fittings, colours and decoration. For wheelchair users, a meeting is organised with the client and their Occupational Therapist to ensure that scheme design takes full account of the clients needs.

Where a development forms part of a larger regeneration master planning exercise we engage with potential tenants, the wider community and other stakeholders regarding scheme design. Following completion of a new development, an appraisal is undertaken with views sought from tenants, contractors, consultants, and Three Rivers' customer and maintenance services sections. Following 6 months occupation, tenants' views are received via a survey with results fed back into the standard specification. For example, a number of tenants requested a shower above the bath as standard and this has since been included within the specification for all contracts.

- **Care & Repair Consultation** – Through consultation with customers, an individual service specification can be drawn up setting out what adaptations the customer requires in their home. This consultation continues throughout the period of the work until completion. The system is currently being improved to formally include customers within the risk assessment process that is undertaken before work commences. This will formally put customer considerations, such as disability, that may impact upon the work programme, at the centre of the risk assessment process.
- **Scheme Visits** – A new procedure is due to be introduced under which where there is an established residents group, the secretary of this group is invited to participate in the scheme visit to assess the standard of the scheme environment.

Aim 3 - Delivering a personalised and responsive customer service

This aim will be supported through:-

- **Complaints Policy & Procedure** – Three Rivers' complaints policy and procedure gives customers an easily accessible route to report complaints. All complaints can be reported to any member of Three Rivers' staff. Details of each report are registered on a database to facilitate analysis and assist with identification. Customers are provided with feedback on an annual basis on the numbers of complaints received and the service areas they relate to along with examples of how specific complaints have resulted in positive outcomes for either the individual complainant or a wider customer group.

Results from the 2007 customer satisfaction survey (see details later) suggest that there is still some progress to be made with regard to handling complaints. A review of complaints handling has therefore been included within the Action Plan at the end of this Strategy.

- **Personalised Service Delivery** - The introduction of the Customer service structure was designed to help deliver a more personalised service to the customer in their home. This promotes the names of Customer

services officers among customers, so that they know who their main contact is for assistance, support or advice. In addition, the Customer services team is able to direct other queries, for example, from residents reporting defects on new developments to the appropriate part of the organisation. Survey evidence shows that there are high levels of satisfaction with the work that officers undertake and this is recognised within the results of the 2007 customer satisfaction survey outlined later in this strategy.

- **Estate Agreements** – Individual Estate Agreements have been developed in Pallion and Wolsingham and will be rolled out to other areas as appropriate. These agreements provide a focus for negotiating service levels which meet the needs and aspirations of individual communities.
- **Web-site** – The Three Rivers web site has been improved to allow customers to access major services more easily, 24 hours per day, throughout the year. RAG members have indicated that they would like this service to be more interactive and the feasibility of this will be investigated with further improvements being introduced if appropriate.

Aim 4 - Support involvement initiatives through resources, finance, training and expertise

This aim will be supported through:-

- **Resident training** – RAG members are trained in equality and diversity and given access to a wide range of training activities which support effective involvement. Where residents are involved in local residents groups they are also given access to these training opportunities.
- **Board member training** – A consultant from PEP (Priority Estates Project) has provided training for board members (including tenant board members) on approaches to resident involvement as well as our responsibilities, Housing Corporation and Audit Commission expectations, and how to involve minority groups. Further training has been provided in relation to 'Chairing meetings' and Equality and Diversity.
- **Staff training** – all staff have been trained in customer care and equality & diversity and possess the appropriate knowledge to deal with enquiries from service users. One of our core values is to 'putting customers first' through a strong commitment to resident involvement, user focus and service excellence.
- **Sharing best practice** – RAG members are encouraged to attend regional and national events to help identify common issues, generate shared confidence in consultation processes and procedures, promote best practice and improve networking between tenant representatives.

- **Sponsoring Community Led Activities** – We are particularly keen to support and sponsor local community led projects in order to improve communication and consultation with our residents. In doing so, we have been able to challenge the traditional forms of consultation and become involved within our local communities rather than impose consultation methods upon them. This form of consultation has proved popular among tenants who are less enthusiastic for more formal approaches.

There are a number of initiatives that the Group has supported including:-

- Hartlepool Headland Carnival
 - Football coaching at local schools
 - Sporting and IT equipment for local schools
 - Community coach trips
 - Sherburn Road Community furniture shop
 - Burbank men's group
- **Community Chest** – Similar to the above, funds are available to finance individual projects requested by the community that will meet local community needs while complementing development and regeneration proposals.
 - **Residents Advisory Group** – funds are provided to cover such matters as travel, child care, training and any other reasonable expense that members may incur.

Aim 5 - Effective communication and consultation with all customers

Details of our various surveys have been outlined earlier in this strategy. This aim will also be supported through:-

- **'The Bridge' Newsletter** - This is published approximately four times per year and provides us with the opportunity to provide information to residents on a range of services, new initiatives and other current issues. It also enables us to consult on changes in services. The editorial panel is made up predominantly of tenants.
- **'Partnernews'** – This is distributed periodically to our partner organisations, providing information on all recent Three Rivers activity including new housing developments and service improvements.
- **Other information** - a wide variety of other information is provided to our customers through handbooks, leaflets, and our website. These not only explain the relevant service area but also how customers can expect to be consulted during the course of receiving the service. A specific leaflet *'Consulting and Involving Customers'* has been

produced to set out how we will consult our customers and how they can influence our policy and services.

Aim 6 - Equal treatment for all

This aim will be supported through:

- **Equal Opportunity & Diversity policy** – the policy commits Three Rivers to improving our approach to Equality & Diversity (E&D) to remain compliant with Housing Corporation expectations and to be effective in service planning. In addition there are representatives from the RAG on the E&D project team in addition to the Tenant Board Member overseeing the policy, to ensure that there is a clear consultation link between tenant views and the policy commitments. It is anticipated that this link will also help identify other flexible and inclusive ways in which all tenants can become involved in participation and consultation arrangements. A detailed E&D Action Plan has been compiled that sets out how we will make further improvements across all service areas.
- **Language translation services** – all our written material can be translated, published or taped, enabling all those with language or sensory needs to access services and information. In addition, we subscribe to a language line service to further improve accessibility to our customers.
- **Accommodation for wheelchair users** – every effort is made to build accommodation suitable for wheelchair users within all new developments. Where a unit of accommodation is pre-allocated, specific property modifications can be included within the development that meets individual client needs.
- **Office accessibility** – All Three Rivers office premises have been assessed for compliance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. In addition to being a legal requirement this acts as a benchmark for ensuring that customers do not experience any unreasonable barriers to access to our premises which might impact on their ability to participate in involvement or consultation activities.
- **Care & Support clients** – a separate Customer Involvement Strategy has been developed in respect of customers of our Care & Support services. This sets a number of aims and objectives for involving customers as well as key actions to improve involvement in the future. These actions include how we will gather customer views, involve them in planning service standards, and ensure equal opportunity for all. The Strategy recognises the diversity of the client group and the need to utilise a wide range of tools to maximise involvement.

Aim 7 - Monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Involvement Strategy

The impact of the Involvement Strategy is monitored and evaluated at two levels. First, through feedback from the range of consultation and information mechanisms outlined earlier, and second, through residents' general perception of their involvement as gathered from the two-yearly **Customer Satisfaction Survey**. The most recent survey, in 2007, provides a very useful current assessment of residents' satisfaction with customer involvement. The detailed survey results relating to consultation are included in the Appendix to this Strategy.

The results indicate that the vast majority of tenants feel they have ample opportunity to participate in the management and decision making process of Three Rivers. Tenants also confirm that they feel their views are taken into account when making decisions, they are kept informed about issues that affect them and that action is taken to resolve their problems. All these factors show comparable results to the 2005 survey and in most cases positive increases over the last 2 years.

The survey highlights that more tenants feel both that they are kept informed about issues they raise and that they are satisfied with the final outcome of their contact with Three Rivers. This indicates an improvement in general communication with tenants which is a sound basis for effective consultation and involvement.

In addition, a majority of tenants feel that we should be more involved in the local community by supporting residents groups, youth clubs, local events, local schools and training opportunities. This supports Three Rivers approach of community involvement as an effective way of engaging with residents.

In relation to our complaints procedure, the satisfaction ratings from respondents who did make a complaint were unacceptably low. This may in part be due to the expectations of the customer making the complaint, however further investigations into how the process can be improved are currently being undertaken.

Alongside the 2007 tenants' survey, a separate survey was undertaken of leasehold customers. Again, the detailed findings, in relation to consultation, can be found in the Appendix. The Survey returns generally lower levels of satisfaction than are reported by general housing customers. This result was not unexpected and improvement work is incorporated into the action plan.

An annual report on the outcomes of activities carried out under this strategy will be made available to Board and customer groups.

7.0 FUTURE IMPROVEMENT

- 7.1 The Customer Involvement Strategy continues to be an effective framework for providing our customers with opportunities for participation in management and decision making. However there is scope for further improvement. Of particular note is the need to ensure that the feedback and information that we

receive is representative of our whole customer base. To address this we will be gathering information on customers interest and preferred methods of involvement as part of our customer profiling process which is due to be launched imminently. The full scope of the profiling is to build knowledge of our customers' household characteristics such as age, ethnicity and gender. Combined with details of interest in participation in involvement activities this information will enable pro-active action to be taken to maximise participation particularly from customer groups who are currently under represented.

- 7.2 In terms of opportunities for participation, Three Rivers offers a wide menu of involvement options. However, there are new technologies available which provide potential for innovative approaches to participation. If Three Rivers is to remain a top quartile performer in the area of customer involvement it is essential that we investigate these technologies and expand our menu of options where appropriate.
- 7.3 Three Rivers top quartile performance relates to customer satisfaction with participation opportunities, but the scope of our benchmarking needs to be broadened. In line with all KLOE areas a more comprehensive approach to comparing our performance against other organisations is currently being developed. Information on the costs and benefits of involvement work which is obtained through this process will be made available to customers.
- 7.4 One significant aspect of involvement which the Housing Corporation is keen for Housing Associations to adopt is providing customers with the opportunity to manage the local services provided in their areas or manage devolved budgets. To date Three Rivers has found that whilst our customers are keen to take up the opportunity to influence the level and scope of services, there has been no appetite for taking on the responsibility of service or budget management. We believe that this is due to the fact that the majority of customers are happy with the way in which their services are managed by Three Rivers and they have confidence in us to deal with the issues that they raise. However we will continue to be aware of the importance that the Housing Corporation attach to this aspect of involvement and promote it as an option where it is appropriate.
- 7.5 The Action Plan, in the next section, reflects the improvement work identified in the review of this strategy and will be monitored on an on-going basis to ensure that we achieve the improvements that we are committed to.

THREE RIVERS HOUSING ASSOCIATION

ACTION PLAN

• Action	Resources	Timeframe	Responsible Officer
• Analyse customer profiling data to identify those customers interested in involvement and ensure they have access to involvement activities	Staff time only	December 2008	Felicity Ashton
• Review ways in which complaints and minor issues are handled to increase customer satisfaction with this process and maximise positive benefit of information provided.	Less than £1,000	September 2008	Steven Walton
• Investigate the costs & benefits of resident involvement, benchmark against other RSL's on a range of information, and share this information with residents	Staff time only	September 2008	Felicity Ashton
• Set performance targets for customer involvement during 2008/09	Staff time only	September 2008	Felicity Ashton
• Impact Assessment update	Staff time only	September 2008	Felicity Ashton
• Introduce post service ring back system to gather information on customers perceptions of specific incidents	Staff time only	July 2008	Steven Walton
• Develop automated satisfaction survey following incoming phone queries	To be included in wider phone software development linked to Berwick transfer	March 2009	Steven Walton
• Research potential of new technologies in gathering feedback, particularly from customer groups who are traditionally hard to reach in terms of involvement activities.	Staff time only	March 2009	Felicity Ashton
• Investigate feasibility of increasing interactive ability of website and introduce any improvements appropriate.	Staff time only	March 2009	Felicity Ashton / Phil Yeoman
• Establish Leaseholders forum	Less than £1,000	December 2008	Felicity Ashton

APPENDIX – KEY RESULTS FROM CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS AND STAFF AND RAG CONSULTATION.

1) Key Consultation Results From Customer Satisfaction Surveys 2007

General housing customers

- 86% of tenants feel they have ample opportunity for participation in management and decision making. This is higher than the equivalent figure from the last survey in 2005 (84%).
- The proportion of tenants wanting to be consulted more remains the same as it was in 2005 at 13%.
- 90% of tenants are satisfied with the quality of the 'Bridge' Newsletter. Similarly, 91% are satisfied with the quality of other printed information from Three Rivers.
- An average of 65% of tenants think that we should be more involved in the local community through training opportunities, local youth clubs and schools, and through sponsorship of local events.
- 64% of all respondents had been in contact with Three Rivers in the previous twelve months.
- 96% of tenants considered staff to be polite, 92% helpful, and 95% were able to get through on the phone with ease. All areas were comparable with the 2005 survey. Respondents who were satisfied with the outcome of the contact increased from 77% in 2005 to 85%.
- 78% believe that we take account of their views when making decisions.
- 77% agree that Three Rivers takes action on issues raised.
- 82% agree that Three Rivers are able to give good advice to solve problems.
- 90% of tenants feel that Three Rivers are good at keeping them informed about issues that may affect them.
- 6% of tenants made a complaint to Three Rivers about the service provided in the last year. This is a slight increase from 2005 (4%).
- Of the small number of respondents who did make a complaint, 26% felt their complaint was dealt with effectively, 26% quickly, 30% fairly and 35% sensitively. This would suggest that improvement is needed in the area of complaint handling, however the nature of some complaints are that they cannot be resolved as the customer's expectations are not realistic or feasible.

Leasehold Customers

- 53% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunities for participation in management and decision making.
- 82% of respondents had been in contact with Three Rivers during the previous 12 months
- 86% of leaseholders considered staff to be polite, 78% helpful, and 95% were able to get through on the phone with ease. 74% of respondents were satisfied with the outcome of the contact.
- 20% of leaseholders had made a complaint in the last year.
- 45 % of those who had made a complaint felt that it had been dealt with effectively by Three Rivers, 57% sensitively, 45% fairly and 18% quickly.

2) Key Results from Staff Consultation Survey

43 staff members responded to an anonymous web-based survey on their views on Customer Involvement.

- 86% said that a lot of their job is about providing a service to customers
- 88% feel that the most important thing to get right when delivering a service is to make sure that it is meeting customers expectations and priorities
- 47% feel that customers can have their say but that Three Rivers staff and management know how to deliver the service best
- 14% feel that listening to customers is important to Three Rivers but is not part of their own job
- 68% feel that services should be delivered in a standard way in line with set policies and procedures so that everyone receives the same service
- 12% feel that customers views are not particularly important in setting Three Rivers corporate priorities
- 16% feel that customers views are not particularly important for staff carrying out their day to day tasks

3) Key Results from RAG Consultation

RAG consultation took the form of open questions around the type of involvement activities and topics that RAG members feel are likely to be popular.

Comments from RAG members included:

Ways of involving customers

- I would like to see customers involved in scheme inspections.

THREE RIVERS HOUSING ASSOCIATION

- People who have concerns about anything in their area should get in touch with the staff who have been trained to try and sort things out.
- More frequent RAG meetings
- Meetings locally to socialise, inform and advise of changes
- Make Web site more interactive

Types of issues

- Improvement programmes
- Improving complaints procedure
- Anti-social behaviour
- Appearance of schemes
- Repairs our way not your way

How to measure success

- By the amount of complaints
- Send out literature every so often asking tenants opinion on how things are working.
- Newsletters / Surveys
- Mystery shoppers
- Random spot checks on on-going work or repairs
- Think – would I be happy with this?