



Board

28 July 2009

Area Board Review - Introduction of themed meetings

Report by Director of Tenancy Services

For information and Discussion	Area Implications	All
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<p>Executive Summary</p>	<p>In April 2009, Board received a report which detailed the findings of the time limited committee which had been established to review the role of Area Boards.</p> <p>Board agreed to dissolve area boards in their current structure following the Annual General Meeting in September 2009, to establish a programme of themed meetings in neighbourhoods across the City and gave a commitment to attend themed meetings on a regular basis.</p> <p>This report details the next steps in establishing a programme of themed meetings across the City.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>Board is recommended to agree to the launch of themed meetings which will replace the previous Area Board Structure.</p>
<p>Business Implications</p>	
<p>YHN Mission and Strategic Objectives</p>	<p>This report supports the following strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and Care to communities Three star excellent services A quality workforce
<p>Value for Money/Efficiencies</p>	<p>Work around value for money informed the review of area boards and the</p>

	decision to replace with a series of themed meetings. An evaluation will be carried out after the second round of themed meetings are delivered.
Resources (financial, property, technological or human)	There will be cost to delivering themed meetings which will include officer time, venue hire and presentation materials.
Impact on Services/Performance	Themed meetings will provide the opportunity for managers to engage with our customers at a local level and gain a better understanding of issues which concern them. Performance information will also be presented which will increase local accountability.
Outcomes for tenants/leaseholders	<p>Our customers will have a better understanding of the services which are delivered locally.</p> <p>There will be increased opportunities to get involved and influence service delivery.</p> <p>There will be an increased opportunity to influence improvement work carried out using Housing Project Fund money.</p> <p>There may be an increase in customer satisfaction with the housing service as a result of achieving the outcomes detailed above.</p>
Risk (reputation, relationship)	An evaluation will be carried out after the second round of themed meetings. Failure to deliver the meetings effectively may harm YHN's reputation. This will be mitigated by involving tenants in the development of the agenda and doing what we say we will do.
Environmental	There are no environmental issues associated with this report.
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications associated with this report.
Equality and Diversity	Consideration will be given to select venues which are accessible.
Stakeholder	The introduction of themed meetings

Involvement/Consultation (planned or already carried out)	follows the review of area boards by the time limited committee which was made up of the three constituent groups and other key stakeholders.
Background papers	Review of Area Boards – 26 April 2009 Review of Area Boards – 24 June 2008 Reports to time limited committee: Scope of review – 12 November 2008 Feedback from Area Boards – 11 December 2008 Drivers for change – 21 January 2009 Review of information provided to Area Boards – 21 January 2009 Review of best practice – 21 January 2009
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Area Board Review – Introduction of Themed Meetings

1. Introduction

1.1 In April 2009, Board received a report which concluded the work of the time limited committee which had been established to carryout a review of the role of Area Boards.

1.2 Board agreed the following recommendations:

1. To dissolve area boards in their current structure following the Annual General Meeting in September 2009.
2. To agree to establish a programme of themed meetings in neighbourhoods across the City.
3. To attend themed meetings on a regular basis.

Board members asked that a further report be presented which gave some detail into how the programme of themed meetings would be introduced across the City.

2. Background

2.1 The board report which was considered in April 2009, detailed the principles by which the themed meetings would operate.

Those principles were:

2.2 Themed meetings would be held in neighbourhoods across the City to respond to issues raised by local residents. The geographical area covered by a themed meeting would not necessarily be co terminus to Community Housing Office operating boundaries or ward boundaries, but would be identified at a local level and vary across the City.

2.2.1 At each themed meeting, standard items of information would be presented which would include local performance against a number of key indicators including service standards, feedback from estate walkabouts and progress on delivering Housing Project Fund schemes. Information would be presented in a less formal way than the area board structure allowed.

2.2.2 Where local neighbourhood agreements are operating, the themed meetings could be used to escalate issues of under performance.

2.2.3 Officers and members of the community could ask for issues of local concern, for example anti social behaviour within an area or increasing numbers of voids to be included in the agenda.

2.2.4 Local housing staff would continue to engage in Newcastle City Councils Ward Committee structure and would continue to be

committed to developing Neighbourhood Agreements.

- 2.2.5 Members of the board would be invited to attend themed meetings on a regular basis. This would improve links between the board and residents.
- 2.2.6 Board and Ward Committee would receive a summary report on the issues discussed and raised by residents.
- 2.2.8 The themed meetings would be responsive to the needs of the local community who would be able to influence the agenda and would increase accountability of local staff in key performance areas.
- 2.2.8 It is proposed that we will hold two themed meetings per Community Housing Office area per year. Meetings will take place in September and April to coincide with the programme for estate walkabouts. An evaluation will be carried out after the second round of themed meetings.

3. Roll out of themed meetings

- 3.1 Members of the Area Board review time limited committee agreed that any model which was introduced should be flexible enough to be responsive to the needs of an area. It agreed that a 'one size fits all' approach across the City is not appropriate and will not be successful.
- 3.2 Housing Service Managers will take a lead role in delivering themed meetings in their neighbourhood. Having a sound knowledge of the area they manage, they will be responsible for defining the audience for the meeting. This may be a geographical area, but could equally be defined in another way and could include:
 - 1. Residents with a shared interest, for example a Tenants and Residents Association forum or residents affected by a regeneration scheme.
 - 2. Residents in a specific property type, for example multi storey properties managed within a neighbourhood.
 - 3. A geographical area covering a range of property types or where a specific issue has been raised either by the community or through another forum.
 - 4. A group of residents of the same age or from minority groups who may share common issues or concerns.
- 3.3 Where there is little or no involvement from local residents through existing tenant and resident involvement, managers may choose to target these areas to try to encourage residents to get involved in the work they do.

4. Setting the agenda

- 4.1 Setting the agenda for meetings will be decided at a local level. Existing groups operating in an area will be canvassed for their suggestions and ideas. This could be local tenants and residents associations, tenants and community forums or other groups.
- 4.2 Agenda items may also be generated from other partnerships working in an area, for example SNAPS (Safe Neighbourhoods Action and Problem Solving), Centre West (Formerly New Deal for Communities) or Ward Committee's.
- 4.3 Where there are no clear agenda items generated, the neighbourhood meeting will be an opportunity for officers to feedback on local issues they feel are important to let their residents to know about and to help residents gain an understanding of the procedures in place for dealing with issues which concern them.

5. Agenda Items

- 5.1 The focus of themed meetings will predominantly focus on YHN business, particularly housing issues. Due to the nature of the business, there will be occasions where themes are cross cutting and will require the input of other partners. Themed meetings will not however duplicate the work of other forums or groups working within an area.
- 5.2 Themed meetings will present an opportunity for officers to feedback the outcomes from estate walkabouts. This may include details of issues raised during walkabouts and an update on how they were resolved. The themed meetings may also be used to get residents involved in the decision making / prioritisation of work funded through the Housing Project Fund budget and to present feedback on completed schemes.
- 5.3 The previous area board structure allowed performance at an area level to be reported. It is anticipated that themed meetings will provide the opportunity for performance at a more local level to be presented. In some instances, suggestions may have been generated on the type of information they wish to see by local residents. Typically, this may include information on empty properties within a neighbourhood or how complaints of anti social behaviour are dealt with. The data presented can then be used to either inform residents around a specific area of work or to form the basis of a discussion on issues faced by residents.
- 5.4 Alternatively, Housing Service Managers will decide on the information presented based on their local knowledge. Themed meetings may provide the opportunity to present information which showcases excellent performance across a suite of local indicators or

may be used as an opportunity to present information which informs residents about a specific issue. An example of this would be around supply and demand for accommodation within an area whereby information could be presented which highlights the issues faced by residents trying to access accommodation. This may include information on type and availability of stock, details of demand, how allocations are made and some data on the number of priority card holders rehoused and average length of residency.

- 5.5 There are many areas of business which could be presented at themed meetings including: performance against Service Level agreements (grounds maintenance, estate maintenance, building cleaning, pest control etc...) advice and support available to residents, our new build programme, feedback on neighbourhood charters etc.

6. Presentation of information

- 6.1 To encourage attendance and active participation in themed meetings, written reports and formal agenda's will be kept to a minimum. Material will be presented in a variety of formats and slide shows and display boards will maximise the use of photographs, graphics and other visual material.
- 6.2 Opportunities to get involved will be maximised and residents will be actively encouraged to participate using a variety of techniques which will include facilitated group work and participatory activities.
- 6.3 Local venues will be used to maximise attendance. Events will be publicised via the YHN website, in local offices and community facilities and via local tenants and residents groups. Other targeted publicity including mail shots will be used depending on the need locally.

7. Delivery of meetings

- 7.1 Housing Service Managers will act as lead officers in their own neighbourhoods and will be supported by the Operational Support Manager within their area to help deliver meetings. Front line staff will be actively encouraged to get involved in the process including the planning of sessions, the preparation of material, the delivery of presentations and the facilitation of group sessions. This can be used as both a training and development opportunity for staff who wish to get involved. The Principal Housing Manager will oversee the process within their area.

8. **Recommendations**

- 8.1 Board is recommended to agree to the launch of themed meetings which will replace the previous Area Board Structure.

9. **Next Steps**

- 9.1 Officers will confirm the programme of themed meetings in each area.