

**TITLE OF REPORT:**           **Gateshead Housing Customer Scrutiny Panel  
(GHCSF) – Progress Update**

**REPORT OF:**               **Jon Mallen Beadle, Managing Director, The Gateshead  
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## **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update on the progress of The Gateshead Housing Customer Scrutiny Panel (GHCSF)

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## **Background**

1. The Gateshead Housing Customer Scrutiny Panel (GHCSF) formally TALISMAN was originally formed in October 2011. This followed an extensive project that considered the opportunities for the development of an independent tenants' organisation in Gateshead.
2. The purpose of the panel is to ensure that the needs and views of Gateshead residents are at the heart of how social housing services are developed and delivered by The Gateshead Housing Company (TGHC) and Gateshead Council.
3. The Panel have a range of tools available to help them to effectively scrutinise a service area, which could include but are not limited to: -
  - Self assessment from Service Manager (written or in person)
  - Question and answer sessions with managers
  - Focus groups of employees or customers
  - Performance information including service standards and benchmarking information where appropriate
  - Feedback from surveys
  - Outcomes from mystery shopping
  - Co-opting of experts or TGHC Customer Service Improvement Groups (SIG's)
  - External learning to compare TGHC performance to other similar providers
4. The committee has, as part of previous update reports, received details of the findings from the following reviews conducted by the Panel: -
  - Anti-social behaviour case management
  - Rent and income
  - Void/Empty Homes management
  - Customer Services (local offices)
  - Lettings
  - Repairs Reporting

## **Review of Customer Satisfaction Surveys**

5. The Panel has recently completed its seventh scrutiny review which covered Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Their findings were presented to the TGHC Customers and Communities Committee in November 2017.
6. The Panel used the following tools to collect evidence and to produce this report:
  - Desktop research
  - Liaising with Service Improvement Group's (SIG's)
  - Service Manager focus group
  - Budget costs and officer time allocation
  - Survey return rates
7. Overall, the review highlighted three areas of positive practice. See Appendix.
8. There were also seven recommendations which, when implemented, will result in improved customer service and, make the process of collecting, collating and learning from surveys more efficient and effective for the company. See Appendix.
9. The Panel requested the Business, Performance and Customer Service Manager to produce an Action Plan responding to the recommendations made. The draft Action Plan was presented and approved by the panel in January 2018. Feedback on plan progression was provided in February 2018.
10. Current progress analysis indicates that four of the seven recommendations have been completed. The remaining three recommendations have deadlines set for their completion.
11. The review recommendations are publicised on the TGHC website. The recommendations and progress against them will also be included in the April 2018 TGHC Newsletter that is sent via post to all tenants and leaseholders and, where requested, via email.

## **Recruitment and development of GHCSP members**

12. There are currently six members on the Panel. The Panel continues to actively look at ways of recruiting new members. Articles have been published in TGHC News, posted using social media and Gateshead's Community Web site to engage with a diverse selection of customers.
13. In its meeting on 15 August the Panel agreed to embark on refresher training and learning. It is important to ensure they have the appropriate skills and knowledge to conduct specific and meaningful scrutiny reviews, this, in turn will have an evident impact on the way housing services are delivered in Gateshead.
14. In December 2017 the Panel undertook two days IT training delivered by Digital Voice for Communities. This organisation offers training opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to use or enhance their digital skills.

15. In February and March 2018 the panel undertook a further training delivered by TPAS (previously Tenants Participation Advisory Service but now known simply as TPAS). This training was conducted over four days and covered:
- Scrutiny refresher – new thinking
  - Working as a group and individually
  - Understanding performance and benchmarking
  - Planning and managing a scrutiny review
  - Developing effective listening and questioning
  - Minute taking, report writing and presentation skills
16. Members of the Panel continue to use a dedicated secure website to help them conduct effective scrutiny reviews.

### **Next steps**

17. The Panel are currently using use their recent learning, enhanced skills and knowledge to choose and conduct their next scrutiny review which is yet to be identified.

### **Recommendation**

18. It is recommended that the OSC note the progress of the GHCSF with further annual progress reports being brought back to the OSC in order to scrutinise the effectiveness of co-regulation.