

Wiltshire Council
Where everybody matters



Your Homes, Your Say.

**Tenant Participation Strategy and
Action Plan 2009-2012**

Foreword

In April 2009, Salisbury District Council will join the new unitary authority to become part of Wiltshire Council.

Salisbury District Council has been operating a successful Housing Department with over 5000 properties that are rented to tenants. The Council strives to provide an excellent service to all its customers. Over the next year our target is to continue the improvement of services to residents and to achieve a standard from the Audit Commission, reflecting the provision of “excellent” services.

The development of a revised tenant participation strategy reflects our commitment to involve tenants in improving the quality of services and deciding how services will be developed. A robust approach to tenant participation will ensure that all tenants have the opportunity to have their say in what matters to them. This will lead to the development of services shaped to the needs of residents and reflecting their needs and preferences. The key rationale for developing this revised tenant participation strategy is to ensure that involving tenants is a central consideration to all activities undertaken by Salisbury District Council and to broaden our approach to involve people as widely as possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for reading our Tenant participation Strategy. Efforts were made in preparation of this strategy to take account of the views of tenant and other interested parties. We look forward to working in partnership with you, in the future, in our joint attempts to support tenant participation.



Councillor Paul Sample
Leader of Salisbury District Council
January 2009

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Introduction

We need help. Your help.

As tenants, you invest time in your homes. You work on them and in them. You raise families and care for people there. You spend time building relationships and interests in the community around where you live.

You do all the same things that private home-owners do. So you have every right to the same kinds of expectations. It doesn't matter that the council manages your home – what matters is that you get the services you deserve, and a say in how those services are provided.

And those services aren't just about receiving repairs and maintenance. Sometimes it's easy to forget that tenants don't only receive housing services. You pay for and receive all the other services the Council has to offer. So we should be involving you in how we deliver those too. This could include working with you on transport issues, for example, or new planning policies, or how schools should develop in the area.

Wiltshire Council wants you to work with us in developing homes, neighbourhoods and services fit for the future. In this strategy we set out how we want to open up other avenues for you to influence how we manage where you live. This could include working

with us to choose new maintenance contractors, reviewing standards of performance and services and a whole range of other things besides.

We are serious about this pledge. We want all our tenants, leaseholders and their families – whatever your age, background or abilities – to be as excited as we are about what greater involvement can offer. Sometime soon, depending on what you are interested in, you could be on a committee alongside countywide agencies and contributing to decisions that will shape peoples' lives into the future. Or you could be part of a group helping the Council in letting a large maintenance contract. Or you could choose to do something in your local community, such as be neighbourhood tenant representative or help start up a young tenants' website.

We have not forgotten our leaseholders – those people who have exercised their 'Right to Buy' on flats around the district. We want to use this strategy to bring both tenants and leaseholders into our decision-making processes. The way it is written is therefore focused on all of you, tenants and residents together.

The emerging new structures in our part of the new unitary authority of Wiltshire Council, will offer possibilities for resident involvement that haven't existed before now. The new Area Boards and Community Area Partnerships (CAPs) will provide forums for local decision making at different levels. Some residents could choose to involve themselves with their local CAP as a way to get their voice heard about local improvements. Working in partnership with Housing and others, local tenant/resident groups might be able to apply to their CAP for funds for a neighbourhood improvement project.

There are lots of changes and opportunities ahead. Only you can help us get things right. Let's make things better together. It's your home, so have your say.



About this strategy

What it's about

This strategy **'Your Homes, Your Say'** is about how you can contribute to getting good quality homes and services for the approximately 5,800 tenants and leaseholders in Salisbury and south Wiltshire. It is a long term and systematic plan of action that is designed to achieve particular results.

You are our 'residents' and we will use that term in this strategy where it is appropriate to show that we are including everyone who has an interest in our housing.

What you can expect to find here includes:

- some background about the area, our residents and our housing
- what we've already done to involve tenants
- what we want to achieve in the future
- some of our most important activities in the next few years, and
- how we are going to gear up for the challenges ahead

Recognising the Need

Why have we produced this strategy? Well, we recognised that we don't involve residents as much as we would like to in the issues which affect them. And that means we don't get the best results we could from the way we manage our services.

There's more about this in the main body of the document.

Key Principles

This strategy is based on a number of key principles;

- That we actively encourage and support resident involvement
- That all Wiltshire Council services should be open to resident involvement
- That resident involvement should be available in a wide range of ways to everyone, and not just those in formal structures, such as the Tenants Panel
- That we will keep residents fully informed of the outcomes of their involvement
- That we will keep things simple

How we put it together

In addition to this document we also have a detailed plan showing everything we would like to do to put residents at the heart of our service. This is the plan of action that will help the council set priorities and plan the work programme sensibly for each of the three years of the strategy.

These are the things we did to put the strategy together



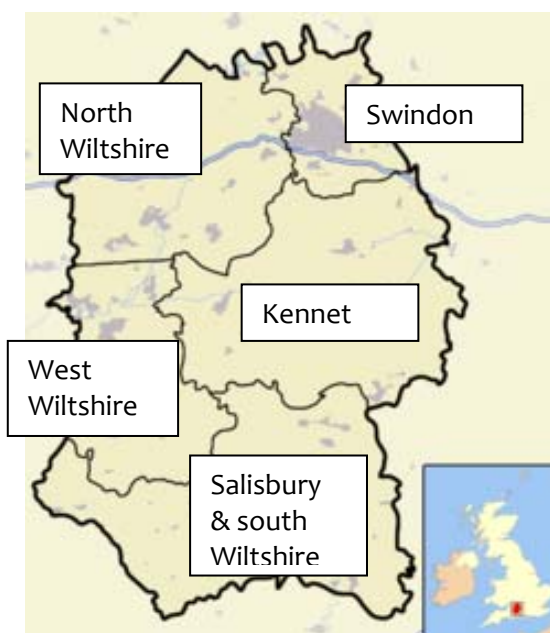
The action plan

Then we used all the information to put together the detailed action plan. This action plan uses the way Audit Commission inspectors ask questions about how tenant participation is managed. The action plan will help us to measure ourselves against national standards that apply to all Local Authority and Housing Association landlords.

Read on to find out more.



About South Wiltshire



The south Wiltshire area

The district covers an area of 389 square miles in the south of Wiltshire, around 90 miles west of London and 30 miles from the south coast. It is a mostly rural area.

Over half of the district is classed as an area of outstanding natural beauty. The Stonehenge world heritage site, Salisbury Cathedral and the Wiltshire Downs all draw in tourists from all over the world.

It's a great place to live and work, but there are issues to overcome, just like anywhere else. These issues are highlighted below.

The People

About 115,000 people live here. However one third lives in the city of Salisbury itself, with the rest in smaller towns and villages. This means that in the rural areas, people are very spread out. There are only 295 people per square mile over the whole district, compared to 538 in the south west region of England and 978 nationally.

The attractiveness of the area means that more people have chosen to live here. The number of people has gone up by 8% since 1991. In the UK the population has gone up by only 3%. This has put pressure on all services but especially affected local people trying to find a home.

Just under a quarter of the population is made up of dependent children (24%) and about the same are over 60 years (23%). There is a military presence, with around 4,000 military personnel stationed here.

Each of these factors place additional pressure on housing and other services.



Ethnicity

We don't have a large number of ethnic minority communities. Only about 3.6% of our people are from black and ethnic groups, compared to 4.6% for the South West and 13% nationally.

There are around

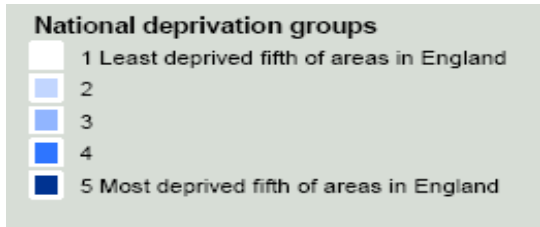
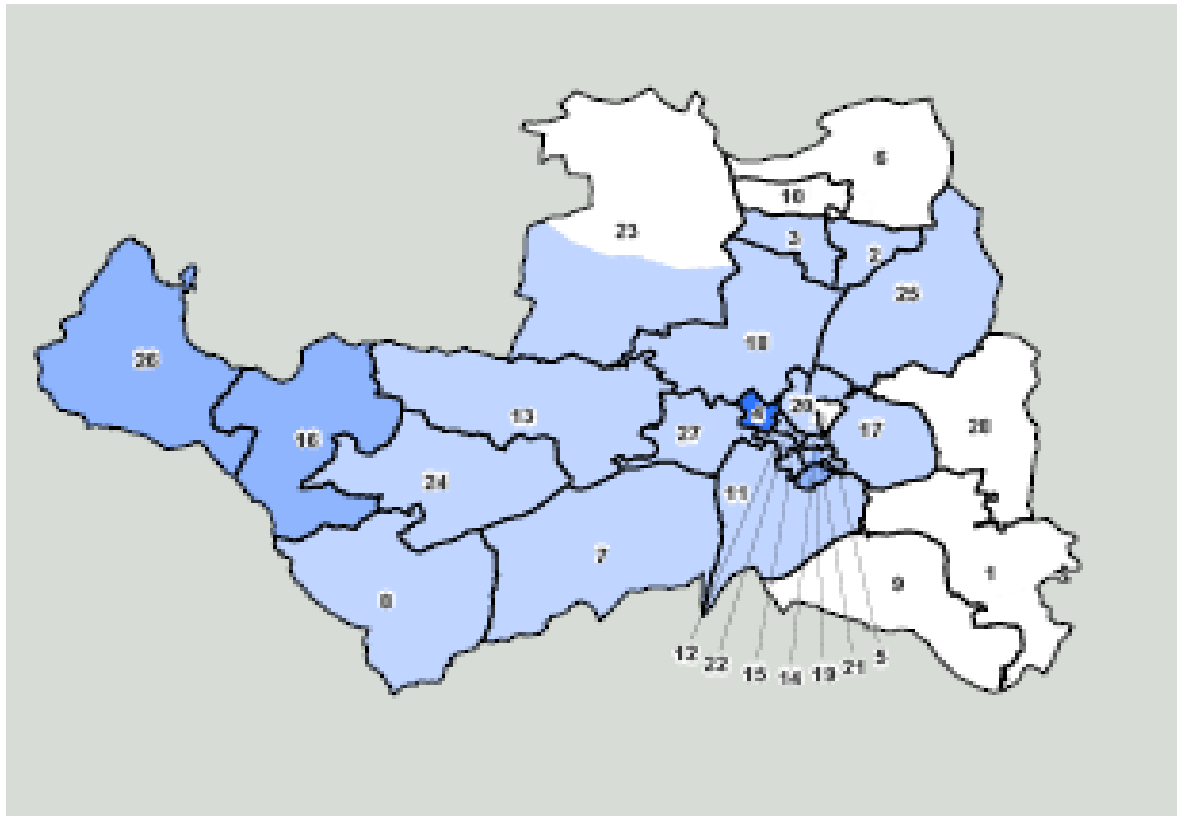
- 650 people of mixed heritage,
- 350 from Asia,
- 150 Black British, Caribbean or Black African,
- 200 Chinese people and
- 200 people from other nationalities.

(South Wiltshire Diversity Partnership 2006)

Deprivation and Health

Overall the borough compares well to the UK but there are pockets of deprivation. Most of the area falls within the least deprived or second least deprived areas of the UK.

Deprivation 2007 (Association of Public Health Authorities)



The health of people in Salisbury is generally better than the England average. Children’s health is good, with lower obesity and higher physical activity. Rates of smoking and binge drinking are lower, with physical activity and healthy

eating generally better. The number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads is high, with 114 deaths and serious injuries each year. This relates to our high traffic volumes and congestion, partly due to visitor numbers.

Unfortunately there are also challenges with

- ensuring access to healthcare services for rural and some other communities.
- an estimated 30% of people with an illness which limits their life chances

The Economy

South Wiltshire overall has had a relatively strong economy. At the time of writing, 68% of the people ‘of working age’ (up to 74 years) are classed as economically active. (This includes working full time, part-time or self employed.)

Unemployment is only 1%, compared to 1.7% in the region and 2.6% for the UK as a whole. (Wiltshire & Swindon Intelligence Network 2008)

However, the rural nature of the economy and reliance on tourism means wages in the area are well below the national average. This means that as well as people who are

unemployed and part-time employed, many who are in full time employment are also living near the poverty level.

About our Housing

What we own



In Salisbury and south Wiltshire, the council owns about 12% (or nearly 6000) of all homes. It also owns and leases five shops. It has approximately 5,400 registered tenants (their name is the principal one on the property), and about 450 leaseholders.

In total, our housing and shops serve a population of around 13,800 people

Housing Associations have around 4% of all social housing in the district and other private rented housing accounts for around 17%. There are a very small number of houses in shared ownership. The rest of the properties in the district (66%) are privately owned.

Our housing stock is made up of

- 97 flats and maisonettes
- 3,209 'starter and young family' homes with 1-2 bedrooms
- 2,073 family homes with 3 bedrooms or more
- 5 Shops

The biggest concentration of what we own is located within Salisbury, on the Bemerton Heath estate. This estate makes up about 18 % (1114) of all our properties. However we also have quite a lot of properties at other locations. In Amesbury we have 520 properties, in Bishopdown 398, St Martin 397 and in Harnham there are 333. The rest are scattered around the district in smaller and rural locations. In some cases there may be around 100 or 200 in the area, but not necessarily all in proximity to each other. In other

places there are only between 30 – 50 of our homes, or even fewer than ten council properties at one site.

Most of our homes were built between 1940 – 1974 (3,626 or over 60%). We have a few (699) that were built before 1939 and 1,054 built after 1974.

In the 2007/08 financial year we spent £1,423,772.00 on repairs and £2,620,701 planned maintenance.

Our waiting list

At the time of writing (winter 2008) we have 2895 people on our waiting list.

During the financial year of 2007/08, we accepted 1,342 applications onto our waiting list and 322 requests for transfers. During the same period 670 of our homes become available for letting. Of these, 235 were allocated to existing tenants needing to move to different areas or to increase or reduce the size of their home. The remaining 435 of our own homes were allocated to new tenants from our waiting list and from the homeless register.

We also work with local Housing Associations, where we sell our land to developers and Housing Associations to create mixed developments. Some of these new homes are set aside for us to use ‘nomination rights’, so we can offer people on our waiting list a Housing Association property.

Our Housing Challenges

These are some of our key housing challenges in the district, and in relation to increasing resident participation:

- Low wages and high house prices means intense pressure on our housing stock. We work with Housing Associations and developers, but finding land for new housing is not always easy.
- Our stock is also often quite spread out – and nearly 20% of people in the district don’t have access to a car. This means they have difficulty getting about, especially in the remote rural areas. That creates problems for us allocating suitable homes, but also in finding ways to get residents to meetings and events.
- It can be a challenge to provide services to rural areas, where transport links are limited. Communities are dispersed and therefore may not identify strongly with the rest of the district. It is more difficult for residents to become involved when the distance between even the nearest settlements can be considerable and any sense of ‘neighbourhood’ may not apply.

- Because we have a large area to cover, the council has to pay more to get services to rural areas. It also means we need more people to deliver participation work, so we can properly reach out into our communities.
- We don't have many black and minority ethnic communities: this can mean their needs can be easily overlooked.
- 20% of children under 16 live in low-income households. This means working with you to get affordable homes in the right places.
- Although there is a high level of internet access around the district, with 58% of the population overall being online, a survey of our tenants showed only about 25% having internet access.
- Finding ways of involving our younger residents in housing decisions and services is a challenge. We don't get young people coming forward to participate in the issues that will shape their future lives in the district.



Where do we want to be in our resident involvement?

We want to be amongst the best performing landlords at involving tenants and leaseholders.

As we said in the introduction, we need help. Your help. Residents' views are what will make our housing services work at their best, for you, your children, your friends and your community.

So we need to find a whole range of new ways for people to get involved and work with us to make our services as customer-friendly as they can be.

Why are we doing this?

Because it makes good sense for you to have a real say in the running of your homes, shops and estates.

'Tenant empowerment is at the heart of the Government's drive to ensure that decent homes are available to all who rent from social housing landlords. Ministers expect tenants to have meaningful opportunities to participate in the day to day management of their properties and to be involved in their landlords' strategic decision making processes.'

Department of Communities and Local Government....

As we re-organise our services by merging with Wiltshire County Council, we have a great opportunity to create something new and fresh.

Resident involvement will help us create quality homes and great communities. It will make our council more modern and forward-looking, especially if we can really engage with a cross section of all our residents. It should stop us providing things people don't want and only provide what they do want. That could save us money, or mean we can invest more in different housing projects.

And we are doing it because it meets the council's own objectives.

Here are some of the ways that the council made public commitments to involving people, especially tenants and leaseholders, in the way it delivers services:

In 2008/9:-

- Undertake a review of tenant participation, leading to a new tenant participation strategy and Compact

In 2009 and Beyond :-

- Ensure the Decent Homes Standard is met
- Increase housing choices for those accessing services through the Council
- Develop landlord services that are 'best-in-class'
- Provide new and better opportunities for residents to get involved in setting service standards and monitoring our performance
- Develop working relationships based on trust and openness
- Work for the benefit of our local communities and encourage them to take pride in the area

- Improve residents' satisfaction with our work and make it easier for them to take part in making decisions
- Meet the needs and priorities of residents
- Promote fairness and equal opportunity for all
- Communicate, especially listening and responding



Who are we doing it with?

We are doing it with the tenants and leaseholders, of course. However, we want to make sure that participation also includes everyone who lives in the district, and spreads out much wider than just Housing Management and councillors, who are the Elected Members of the council.

It's important that other council departments also involve you more. We will be working hard to get everyone in the council to think about involving residents, from when they start something, not at the end. We want the council to take account of your voices and views.

By the end of this strategy (2012) we hope that everyone will understand the benefits that working with residents of our housing areas can offer to a whole range of services beyond the housing department.



We also work in a wide range of partnerships with other agencies. Examples of these are:

- South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance ⁽¹⁾
- South Wiltshire Diversity Partnership
- South Wiltshire Economic Partnership
- South Wiltshire Community Safety Partnership

We will create opportunities for you to be represented at these partnerships, and other key project groups, for issues that affect your lives. We will discuss with you the possibilities for setting up local, district-wide and county-wide tenant/resident bodies, and having representation on regional and national residents' groups, so that Salisbury residents have a voice more widely.



- (1) *The Alliance is the Local Strategic Partnership for the south Wiltshire district. It comprises elements of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Its aim is to improve the quality of life of local people by promoting joined-up working at a local level. The Alliance was set up in 1998 and produced its first community plans for the area in 2000. A second generation of community plans was produced in 2005.*

What does resident participation look like?

Levels of participation

Tenant & resident participation can be thought of as happening at three different levels:

- **Council gives Information** - (Level 1)
Where residents are provided with information on what we do and the services we provide.

At this level the council gives out information usually after decisions have been made. Changes can be made after this, but often the decisions are not easy to undo. We want to increase the quality and range of information you receive, and make it useful.

- **Residents have Influence** – (Level 2)
Where residents can actively change what happens through responding to consultation, or actively taking part in events and discussions.

We do a lot of consultation during the year, often by paper surveys, or focus groups and meetings. These do change how we act, how we prioritise work and spend money on services. However, we want to radically expand the ways you can influence what goes on in your area.



- **Residents can intervene directly** – (Level 3)
This is where residents actually **take control** of their homes and services.

Residents groups in other councils have taken over maintaining play areas, managing community halls and even formed their own housing management companies. They've been given training and budgets to do this well. We would like to see similar opportunities in Salisbury and south Wiltshire.

Formal and informal opportunities to participate

Participation can be in very many different ways, but they tend to group under two types – formal and informal.

Formal - anything which involves a regular commitment of time, and has set rules about its business and ways of operating.

Informal – it happens when it's needed, can be unstructured, time limited or one-off

Such as:

- Membership of a tenants group that meets at regular intervals
- Being on a district-wide or county partnership
- Agreeing to have your name put on a 'residents' survey panel' to be regularly consulted on your opinions
- Membership of a group of residents and staff that manages maintenance contracts

Such as:

- Submitting a photo or an article for Housing Matters magazine
- Volunteering locally (e.g. litter pick group)
- Turning up to open meetings
- Mystery shopping (random checks on service quality)
- Responding to a web-based survey
- Joining an estate 'walk-about'



Where we are now

All three of these levels are happening in south Wiltshire, but we are **mostly at Level 1 with some aspects of Level 2.**

We have formal and informal processes for consulting and involving residents. These are longstanding, are valued and do achieve some change. However, we need to take a whole new look at how we make tenant participation far more effective and more representative of the whole community.

Our formal structures

Tenant Panels

The Tenants' Panels

- Represent the views of council tenants and leaseholders
- Campaign to improve services
- Are consulted on improvement programmes and other major issues

We have a Tenants' Panel, a Leaseholders' Panel and a Sheltered Housing Forum, each of which serves the whole district. They all meet regularly to discuss matters concerning those tenants who they are representing. The work of these panels is supported by the Tenant Participation Officer and Leasehold and Sales Manager.

However, they only have a maximum total membership of about 40 tenants for all three groups, plus some councillors. The diversity of our population is not represented in several respects, including age range, ethnic origin, and family composition.

Our current formal structures for tenant involvement need to be more representative of all ages, communities and backgrounds

Tenants' Satisfaction Survey

The council has a regular tenants' satisfaction survey. The results are reported back to the council and the Government. If you get one, it's really important for you to complete it, as it provides us with a lot of useful information on how things are going.

The most recent survey was completed in spring 2008 with a response from 25% of tenants. (This survey doesn't apply to our leaseholders). The results this year showed 77.54% of tenants who responded are satisfied with Hhousing services overall.

Previously this survey has led to changes in how we respond to reports of anti-social behaviour. It has also prompted changes in what we prioritise in the programme for the planned maintenance of properties. The review of the strategy for Tenant Participation, which has led to this report, was also in response to low levels of satisfaction regarding tenant participation.

We need to find ways of surveying leaseholder satisfaction too.

Complaints and comments

Complaints are another way in which residents' comments feed into our services. Trends identified in stage one and two complaints are reported to our management teams. They make sure that lessons are learnt and improvements put in place where necessary.

Our current formal structures for tenant participation are not as complete or effective as we need them to be. We will be expanding the opportunities for regular involvement in our business.

Our informal structures

Focus groups

Focus Groups have also provided an opportunity for residents to inform the decisions we make. For example:

- In March 2006 focus groups were held to consult on Salisbury's customer commitments/service standards. This led to extra staff located at public access points to reduce waiting times.
- A focus group was also used to consult on the efficiency review of Customer Access. Residents' ideas were used to inform the review.



However our work so far has shown that there is a huge range of informal methods of getting people involved which we've not used. Many other authorities use methods like:

- A young tenants website
- Interactive web-based discussion boards and Big Brother style video diaries
- Mystery shoppers
- Resident volunteer schemes
- Moped loan for residents without adequate transport
- Open meetings and surgeries on issues including setting the housing budget

- Creation of tenant-led drama groups who take the issues and participation message out to the whole community
- Incentive schemes such as providing a full hot meal after meetings to encourage attendance
- Inter generational local improvement activity, e.g. litter picks, making hanging flower baskets, 'Dreamschemes' (where credits are earned by community improvement work and rewarded e.g. with adventure or camping weekend).

Our current informal structures need to be much more creative, especially if we are to get young people and working parents involved. We also need to make sure our BME tenants are included, and that our approaches are accessible to and understandable for everyone who wants to take part.

Our Participation Survey

We carried out a survey in July-August 2008, supported with some face to face interviews. We surveyed a total of 99 tenants with the following age profile:

- | | |
|------------------|----------|
| • Under 18 years | None |
| • 18 to 30 | 13% (13) |
| • 31 to 45 | 30% (30) |
| • 46 to 60 | 23% (23) |
| • 60 and over | 33% (33) |

We recognise that this profile has a high representation in the older age groups, and which is likely to have had an effect on the outcomes. We are also missing the 18 and under age group who do live in our homes but aren't actually the holder of the tenancy. These age groups are much more likely to be interested in electronic forms of communication. It will be important to ensure that future surveys are more representative of everyone who lives in our housing.

However, the survey is a useful start and showed the following main outcomes:

- One third wanted to be contacted and give responses by e-mail or text, and one quarter said they would be interested in e-discussion groups
- 40% said they would be interested in 'mystery shopping'
- 49% were interested in local working groups, and 34% in a 'Neighbourhood Voices' scheme. (This is where one tenant is elected to collect their neighbours' opinions and acts as the liaison with the council. Support and resources are provided. It can also be done as a 'job-share'.)
- Over half were keen on mobile involvement units for isolated pockets of houses, and incentive schemes or local funds to support tenant involvement
- Only 25% wanted a young tenants site (probably reflecting the age profile of people who answered the survey), and
- Over half were happy to be contacted by the Tenant Participation Officer about developing their involvement.

Key barriers to effective participation were described as shortage of time (46 people), not liking meetings (19 people) and childcare issues (12 people). 33 others cited mostly work-related reasons such as night work and shift work.

It is clear that there are quite a number of residents interested in becoming involved in different ways. We need to ensure that we offer as many formal and informal ways of being involved as possible, and that we publicise them in places and in ways that will reach all our tenants. We have drawn up a list of these at Appendix B.

Our vision and aims for resident involvement

Vision

We will offer high quality opportunities for participation, so that everyone who wants to be involved, is involved, in ways that meet their needs, supported by training and development

Key Aims

We have four key aims:

1. To provide the widest possible range of ways for residents to get involved which meet a wide range of needs, interests and aspirations
2. To provide training and development which builds individual and community skills
3. To offer participation activities that lead to organisational change and improvements in services
4. To increase tenants' satisfaction with opportunities for participation in improving the quality of life in their neighbourhoods

The strategy has specific actions attached to it to achieve its objectives and is aiming for results that are measurable. The details of these are set out in the Resident Involvement Action Plan (Appendix 1)

What we want to achieve; how and by when we want to achieve it

We want to show that participation makes a difference. The following are the changes we will make to enable more residents to be involved. We will know we have achieved our aims when:-

1. We have introduced a comprehensive resident involvement register with an increase from the present level of 2.4% (140) of our residents listed, up to 3% (175) during 2009/10; to 4% during 2010/11; to 5% (230) during 2011/12
2. We have established the present number (our 'baseline') of residents and increased the following by 5% each year of this strategy:
 - those who feel well informed about the range of opportunities available ¹
 - those who say there are one or more opportunities to become involved, which meet their individual needs and are accessible and appropriate to their circumstances, (whether or not they actually do get involved) ²

- those who say they have been actively involved in formal or informal participation during any 12 month period – and most were satisfied or very satisfied with the arrangements ³
3. When 75% of residents who respond to our surveys report high satisfaction with the range and variety of choices for ways to participate
 4. When tenants and leaseholders feel they have been involved in the decision-making process relating to the housing management process
 5. We will aim to help start up one new tenant/resident forum in each of two additional wards/localities each year of this strategy, where there is sufficient level of interest for sustainable activity
 6. When at least 10% (580) of our residents have been involved in a participation structure by the end of this strategy
 7. When 90% of those involved in both informal and formal participation report they are satisfied or very satisfied with their support, training and development opportunities
 8. When 50% of those surveyed can give examples of participation leading to change for the better, either in the way the council operates or their quality of life (by 2012)
 9. When staff at all levels & councillors have received awareness training about the significance of resident involvement for Audit inspections, the importance of co-operation across all departments and the budgetary implications of increased resident involvement.



1 Knowledge of the range of participation choices has not been measured in previous years

2 Appropriateness of participation choices to individual needs has not previously been measured

3 Levels of involvement in decision making has not previously been measured

New Resident Involvement Initiatives

We want to reach out to a much wider range of our tenants. This includes the younger age group who may themselves be our future tenants. We need to make sure that leaseholders and sheltered scheme tenants have a range of opportunities for being involved. This means offering a much wider choice of activities and we've listed all of these in Appendix B. Some of the big changes include:

- Bringing in young people through offering a wide range of e-communication, activities and events which will inspire them to come forward
- A big change to the opportunities for being closely involved in the 'business end' of what we do – such as service review panels; contract boards to manage agreements with external contractors; staff recruitment; tenant groups to review best practice in resident involvement around the country
- Incentive schemes – to reward people for giving up their time on an informal basis, including recognition of contributions by people who have caring or other additional responsibilities
- An Annual Resident Involvement Awards scheme – for those who have done the most for tenant participation in the district
- An 'involvement register' – so everyone who wants to have a voice is registered and we know what they want to be involved in.



Local Community Groups

Some of our residents may have an interest in joining with their neighbours to tackle a local issue or improve their local environment. We will listen out for tenants and leaseholders individually voicing opinions on local issues that could be suitable projects for collective action. We will help residents with a common interest of this sort to come together, to form themselves into a group and to plan and resource their chosen activity. We will encourage them in developing local networks and partnerships and in increasing their skills and knowledge. We will have an agreed method for increasing the number of such local groups around the district and agreed measures to help them remain viable over time. We will join tenants up with relevant projects and services being run by other

council departments and external statutory and voluntary agencies, (such as community development, health and family support work).

Involvement Register

The Involvement Register will record residents who are interested in being consulted or want to be involved directly in the way their homes or areas are managed. Anyone who lives in one of our properties will be eligible. This includes a leaseholder of a flat (through Right to Buy) or of a shop unit

We will be doing a lot of publicity about the Involvement Register and will ask you to tell us what you're interested in. For example some residents might want to be involved in a specific topic, such as the environment. Others they might want to be on a survey panel, that is, agree to be contacted once or twice a year to be asked for an opinion on different matters.

We will also be using the Involvement Register to build new relationships. We have already mentioned wanting to involve more young people. However we will use the involvement register to develop participation also for black and minority ethnic people, people with disabilities, parents and working people who have limited time to spare.

As we go along, the range of issues that residents can contribute to will expand, as we are able to increase our resources to form new groups or ways of participating.

Resident Involvement Awards

We want to introduce Resident Involvement Awards.

These awards will be given to residents or groups that make an outstanding impact on local participation. We will publicise the awards and residents will be able to nominate in person, phone, e-mail, write or text their nominations to us. We will set up a Board which will include residents to consider the nominations.

An award ceremony will be held at an annual residents' conference followed by widespread media coverage, including our own website and publicity in Housing Matters.

Leaseholder Involvement

Leaseholders now form approximately 8% (454) of the population living in Council properties. We expect this will increase in the coming years. Leaseholders have the same right to participate as tenants do.

As part of this strategy, we intend that leaseholders are invited to be part of all the participation activities on offer just like any of our other residents. Some choices for resident involvement may be more attractive to leaseholders than others: we will make sure that there are opportunities relevant to their interests as well as to tenants' interests.

Resources

Becoming excellent at tenant participation will not be easy and will need to evolve over a period of time. It is difficult to compare resources for this activity with other housing providers because of the different funding arrangements, different geography and differing priorities etc. However, it is fair to say that our research has shown that far less resource are devoted to this activity in this authority than neighbouring housing organisations of a similar size.

Becoming excellent at tenant participation will be challenging. We have a long way to go. It is now compulsory under the inspection regimes of the Audit Commission that all Local Authorities providing a housing function work towards meeting the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's) for tenant participation. The KLOE's outline how tenant participation should be delivered within a good and excellent authority and the Council must produce evidence to demonstrate that it is meeting those requirements. Depending on what evidence is produced the Audit Commission will give a score to the Council and make recommendations for areas of improvement.

Current Position

We currently employ one Tenant Participation Officer with a budget of £20,000 to cover the expenses of publishing Housing Matters, running the Tenant's Panel and all other related activity. The role of Tenant Participation Officer is quite wide ranging but tends to involve a lot of administration rather than community development work.

Proposed Resources

To 'kick-start' the programme outlined in the rest of the report, it is proposed that a full-time Tenant Community Development Officer be employed alongside the Tenant Participation Officer posts at an additional cost of around £30k.

Initially I would also propose increasing the Tenant Participation budget to 30k to get the various initiatives proposed in the report underway. We would expect to contain these extra resources within efficiency savings in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

The amount of resources required in future years will be reviewed on an annual basis. If the initiatives are successful, it is quite possible that over a period of 3-5 years the level of resources will need to be doubled subject to the conditions within the Business Plan at that time.

We need to think outside the traditional approach of creating and appointing new council-funded permanent tenant participation posts. The staff structure mentioned above will be considered alongside other options such as:

- Offering secondments, or re-arranging people's roles so they can integrate participation into what they already do on a part-time basis (ie half time participation, half time their other work). In this case the full time equivalent (FTE) might be provided by 6 or 8 people not all of whom would be in housing, to spread the participation message more widely into the organisation

- Linking with voluntary groups– there may be voluntary sector bodies who already work with our existing or potential tenants, who would be interested in collaborating with us, e.g. advice agencies; child poverty organisations; advocacy groups.
- Jointly funded posts with other public sector organisations such as Housing Associations, the health service, police/ fire service and other council departments, for example, who might also be looking at increasing opportunities for participation
- Opportunities for linking participation with wider equality and diversity work and with community development and community partnership staff
- Securing external funding to pay for the increase in the people doing this work.
- Creating New Deal posts via JobCentre Plus, which are eligible for a 6-month subsidy. These could be Assistant level roles recruited from our tenant population to act as catalysts for neighbourhood level activity



Monitoring

Formal structures

We will set up an overall Resident Participation **Steering Group** including tenants and leaseholders, to manage the programme of work. The Chairs of Tenants and Leaseholders Panels and of the sheltered scheme Forum, the Housing Portfolio Holder, the Head of Housing and the Tenant Participation Officer will be on this group. Wide-ranging council officer and member composition for the group will be drawn up. However chairmanship will be decided by the group as a whole, and will not necessarily be a council officer.

The Steering Group will:

- Collect views & experiences of all involved in new participation activities (residents, staff, and councillors) to use in evaluation of progress towards the results being aimed for.
- Formally report action plan progress to the Service Directorate of the new unitary authority, Wiltshire Council and the Local Strategic Partnership at least every 6 months.
- Report relevant aspects of the work and discuss results with any other appropriate strategic partnership for the area, as the issues arise.
- Take reports to the corporate management team and cabinet on a topic-by-topic basis.
- Take reports back to residents groups, area and open meetings, as well as publicise results widely through as many means as possible (see the action plan and Appendix B)

Other reports and processes

We will review how we currently monitor resident participation and change our processes to show how the new participation activities are making a difference. This will depend on having Resident Participation staff in place to deliver the work and monitor the results.

Resident Skills Training and development

The development of new skills and knowledge is very important for all of us. No-one can be expected to be as confident or skillful at a task when they first start as when they have been doing it for a while. We don't expect tenants, leaseholders and other residents to set up or join residents' groups and automatically feel completely confident from the very start. That's why we will have a wide programme of training and development opportunities.

We will do a skills audit of the people who want to be part of our formal structures and set up a yearly training programme to meet their needs.

We have set ourselves goals to give residents more say, and help them participate in other services as well as housing. This means that the choice of training opportunities needs to be much broader than just courses on effective meetings or housing issues. For example, if residents are going to be on maintenance contract boards then they may need training such as 'How to Procure and Manage Contracts'. Or if they want to be involved on the Community Safety Partnership they will need the right background training for that.

Not only that, but we will train and develop people who want to progress their participation 'career' with us. So whether one of our residents wants to become more skillful in chairing a high profile group or to be active more locally with their own neighbours, we will do our best to make the right courses available to them at each stage of their involvement.

We will work out the best ways to publicize, evaluate, and monitor take-up of training. We will give recognition for tenants' increasing their skills. We will agree with tenants a fair and realistic policy for funding and subsidising tenant development opportunities.

We have drawn up a possible list of training courses (Appendix C). This list will be developed as the participation work progresses.



Equality and Diversity

This strategy is about opportunities for everyone to become involved, if they want to. That means changing the way we work and the way we think about our community. We have tried to ensure that this strategy will open up participation opportunities to everyone, whatever their background.

We will need to make sure that the opportunities we offer people don't create new barriers.

This means things like:

- Investigating the possibility of providing easy read formats for residents with learning impairments, and spoken word software for blind and visually impaired people who want to use our website
- having meetings space which disabled people can get into and with enough space to bring their carers

- providing interpreters, or facilities and space for people to bring relatives and people who can translate for them
- trying to locate activities and events within easy reach of all forms of transport – quite a challenge in our rural area – or laying on transport to get people there
- providing information and publicising opportunities in as many ways, languages and locations as possible.
- Identifying issues and matters of interest to our different communities

That's a big task! Part of this will be to do an assessment of how what we do now has an impact on our equality standards, and what we should do to include more groups. This 'impact assessment' will probably be on a large scale (over the whole service). However, we will need to screen each event and opportunity before we set it all up to make sure we are catering for everyone we should include.



Introduction to the action plan

We've put together a detailed action plan, which is a separate document that shows all the activities we need if we are going to become excellent at resident participation. It names who will be responsible for each action and when it will be completed. It also shows how often the plan will be reviewed and by whom, and how we will use the information from the review.

The action plan is set out according to the way the Audit Commission inspects tenant participation, using a method called 'Key Lines of Enquiry' (KLOE). It outlines what

tenant participation in an excellent authority would look like. Our actions are designed so we can also be excellent.

Closing remarks

We hope this strategy has been useful in explaining how we are developing resident participation across Salisbury district. If you have any comments, please contact us.

Contact Us

This strategy will be available on our website www.wiltshire.gov.uk
Follow the Tenant Participation link for this and other relevant information:
www.wiltshire.gov.uk/housing/councilandhousingassociations/tenantparticipation

For more information on this strategy, or to have it provided in different languages and formats, please contact the person listed below:

Tenant Participation Officer. 26 Endless St. Salisbury SP1 2DR
Tel: 01722 434 4490 Fax: 01722 434 386 Email: hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk

You can also ask to see a hard copy at the following places:

| Location | Address | Telephone |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Amesbury Information Point | The library, Smithfield St. SP4 7AL. | 01980 622833 / 623255 |
| Amesbury Citizens Advice Bureau | The Health Centre, Smithfield St. SP4 7AN | 01980 622696 |
| Mere Information Point | The library, Barton Lane, Mere BA12 6JA. | 01747 861211 |
| Mere Citizens Advice Bureau | The Library. Barton Lane. Mere BA12 6JA. | 01747 860030 |
| Salisbury library | Market Place, Salisbury SP1 1BL | 01722 324145 |
| Citizens Advice Bureaux | 18 College St; Salisbury SP1 3AL | 01722 327222 |
| The Surgery | Park Rd; Tisbury SP3 6LF (first Thursday of every month 1pm – 4pm) | 01747 870204 |
| Bemerton Heath Housing Estate Office | 151A Gainsborough Close, Bemerton Heath Salisbury SP2 9HB | 01722 334510 |
| Friary Housing Estate Office | Whitefriars Rd; Salisbury SP1 2HR | 01722 412893 |
| Housing Management office | 26 Endless St; Salisbury SP1 1DR | 01722 434280 |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Housing Office, Pennyfarthing House | 18 Pennyfarthing St; Salisbury SP1 1HJ | 01722 434222 |
| Bemerton Heath Neighbourhood Centre | 60 Pinewood Way. Bemerton Heath Salisbury SP2 9HU www.bemertonheathnc.org.uk | 01722 349271 / 416885 / 340182 |
| The Friary Estate Community Hall | Carmelite Way Salisbury SP1 2HW | N/a |
| NCH Wessex Family Centre Website: http://www.nch.org.uk | The St Martins Centre St Martins Church Street Salisbury SP1 2HY | 01722 411178 or Mobile: 07974 819639. Fax: 01722 411178 |

This information is correct at the time of printing

Test and evaluate the opportunities/utility of all of the following means of involving and engaging tenants:

Formal – Boards, Champions and Meetings etc

Opportunities for tenants to be directly involved in the business in a formal structure.

These assume that all will have tenant representation and membership of the group or panel is relatively constant (but subject to change under elections or other agreed constitutions/processes for rotating membership).

Any of these established should be **supported by the introduction of a tiered system of allowances to incentivise people into key posts.**

- Tenant Participation Steering Group – developing the strategy action plan and overseeing the work programme to 2011
- Tenant Supporters - Recruitment of direct support for the tenant participation officer, ring-fenced to tenants only) working for the council several days a week in localities on a short term contract (eg 2 years), supported by appropriate training and development
- Tenant Forums – a locality structure for regular meetings as practiced now (but widened to ensure each ward is covered by at least one active group)
- Service Plan Board - Tenant involvement in developing and agreeing the annual Housing Service plan
- Budget Board – A Housing and Corporate budget review group
- Locality Champions - Establish network of tenant participation ‘champions’ in relevant localities (eg ward) – not necessarily the same as chairs or deputy chairs of forums
- ‘Super forum’ meeting twice yearly for whole authority
- Tenant mystery shoppers and programmed mystery shopper exercises targeting important or poorly performing services
- ‘Super shoppers’ – ban of tenants trained to conduct random audits of any service/facility and report back

- Service/Best value review group - Tenant involvement on programmed whole service reviews including with role as 'volunteer inspectors' of services

- Tenant management of small scale assets – Encouragement and training for ‘Right to manage’ combined with transfer of local, small scale assets or areas to tenant management (play areas, community halls) with appropriate devolved budget.
- Tenant management cooperatives - for blocks of appropriate housing, with appropriate training and devolved budget
- Procurement specification and contract management boards – joint tenant and officer/member participation in design specification, tendering, target setting and contract management of services, on a contract-specific or issue-specific basis
- Tenant equality groups - Range of tenant interest groups eg based on equality strands (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and faith)
- Thematic Interest Groups - Other interests such as environmental matters, crime and disorder
- Area Roadshows - Regular tenant-led or joint council/tenant area and borough roadshows, including in conjunction with other partners who are also developing community engagement
- Partnership Boards - Tenant representation on key corporate/strategic /service partnerships (not just Housing related) and the Local Strategic Partnership
- Resident scrutiny panel (real (ie meets) and/or virtual – to review reports and proposals for key decisions after consultation and involvement but before they are put to Housing management team and Corporate Management team
- Complaints Review Group - Regular review and analysis of complaints and compliments service with specified terms of operation and performance targets, possibly even partially administered by tenants
- Tenant Observers – Bank of tenant ‘observers’ of council meetings who then report their views back to council
- Recruitment and Selection panels - Tenants involved in drafting/reviewing job descriptions and recruitment process/ panels for housing staff including senior management
- Local or borough wide Crime Watch network - linking with strategic partnerships on Crime and Disorder and directly with local police (crime and fear of crime consistently a key factor in a good place to live)

- Tenants (survey) panel – similar to borough-wide citizens panel, but drawn from and representative of all tenants (and equality groups, and as far as possible geographical locations) who are surveyed periodically throughout the year on a range of issues
- Best practice review group – including Beacon/charter mark visits programme taking tenants to leading authorities (or other similar excellence mentoring programme)

Informal and ad hoc

These are ways of directly engaging tenants or facilitating engagement:

- Summary Participation Strategy - Send out summary of the strategy with postage paid 'Key player' form to all households.
- Annual report summary - Send out annual report on tenant participation with pre-paid 'key player' form to all households
- Restructure of the council's website pages for TP and introducing new phone numbers and e-facilities such as mobile SMS/text and e-mail direct contacts with officers (1.1)
- 'Key player' forms – periodically send or publicise the principal ways of getting involved on a 'key player' form for tenants to mark and return if interested in specific activities or roles
- Social networking site profiles and information for the council (eg Facebook and YouTube) enabling direct e-contact
- Interactive Sounding/Message/Discussion Board on corporate website - key Housing and Tenant Participation issues (with appropriate moderation)
- Direct RSS feeds to users computers on key housing and tenant participation matters including consultation events and deadlines (e-newsletter with links)
- Tenant Participation Blog with user response facility

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|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Appendix B | Possible Participation, Engagement and Facilitation Methods | January 2009 |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|

- Internet kiosks at appropriate/secure locations for those who do not have web access (not confined to only council-owned sites and locations)
- Specific tenant participation website
 - Overall website
 - Young Tenants (also linking to other key social and educational services)
 - Children and Young People site (up to 18?)
- Automated SMS/text and e-mail messaging for subscribers interested in progress of specific initiatives

- E-voting – electronic and text voting on key decisions, use of facilitated electronic voting at tenants meetings, website e-polling on issues with instant results displayed ('what do you think of... vote now!')
- Pre-paid Postal voting (as for elections, only for specific initiatives)
- Video conferencing at key public/meeting locations, plus possibility of videophones/users or officers/members sending direct 'video clip' facility (eg via You Tube), 'Big Brother' style video diaries
- Online consultation register for housing and other related issues (possible authority-wide consultation register) and ability to submit responses to consultations directly online through an input form specifically designed for each consultation
- Hard copy of consultation register supplied and publicised widely at public locations, information points and meetings
- Webcam facilities for meetings and boards to enable remote viewing
- Photographic exhibitions/competitions (what makes people 'mad, sad or glad' about the local area)
- Area or borough wide launch events for specific initiatives
- Offering tenants and residents resource rooms with internet and other facilities in the borough
- Resident/tenant volunteer scheme and register – helping those less able in the community with tasks such as shopping, filling in forms, access to services, transport
- Tenant-led/joint council and tenant crèche facilities to maximise involvement for single and working parents
- Venue rotation to enable widespread geographical coverage

**Appendix
B**

**Possible Participation, Engagement and Facilitation
Methods**

January 2009

- Each Tenants group/interest group/locality champion to be contactable by dedicated e-mail and SMS
- Incentive (direct payment) schemes for increasing participation – vouchers for shops or key services such as bus, train and taxi, library loans, time spent (payment per hour), fuel costs/mileage, prize draw quizzes and prize draws for

surveys, proper meals after meetings, not just biscuits and coffee, childcare facilities

- Moped loan for rural community representatives with no access to public transport or where transport is infrequent
- All-resident, intergenerational community events designed around specific topics such as ‘Planning for Real’ – considering issues and development desires/needs for the area such as designing out crime, making the place cleaner and greener etc
- Open meetings at various localities to discuss council’s housing/corporate budget proposals, with feedback on outcomes
- Open meetings post budget allocation to review the budget for the area, discuss and agree locality-based spending priorities
- Tenant-led estate or ward based open days- tenants showcasing their local area to link with introduction and expansion of choice-based lettings
- Tenant-led door knocks and leaflet drops on activities and opportunities in the area for getting involved
- Focus groups, tenant-led, or run jointly by external facilitators (to encourage buy-in)
- Facilitating advocacy - Allow and encourage tenants to speak through advocacy and voluntary organisations where they feel more comfortable with this approach, using direct provision, grants and other direct incentives
- Bus, taxi and public transport advertising of opportunities and contacts
- Advocacy ‘on-tap’ – ensure that the council offers advocacy and specialist support including translation/interpretation for people with physical or other difficulties for local meetings

**Appendix
B**

**Possible Participation, Engagement and Facilitation
Methods**

January 2009

- Make some or all Tenant Participation Steering Group meetings public (see section 1.11)
- Creation of tenant led drama group(s) bringing messages on key issues to areas throughout the borough

- Regular/visible presence of TP officer or support officer at information points and key locations during the week
- Radio phone ins including using any minority radio slots such as BME/older people/youth
- Use parish council structure and meetings to deliver increased opportunities and discussion
- Use important rural and community events such as agricultural shows and village/school/college fetes
- Coffee mornings and summer days trips for older people
- Offer direct incentives for officers and other tenants to actively recruit tenant participants (ex-gratia payments, vouchers etc)
- Open forum ‘yellow sticky boards’ or ‘note drop boxes’ in defined /mobile locations for any comments people wish to make, anonymously or otherwise
- Tenant-led equality impact assessment for venues and events (supported by officers with appropriate training provided)
- Tenant-led training groups (some tenants will have skills that can be used to train others in their locality) which could also be income-earning to pay for events and facilities
- Annual resident involvement awards, for residents who are voted to have made an outstanding contribution to improving participation.

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| Appendix B | Possible Participation, Engagement and Facilitation Methods | January 2009 |
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- Make resident involvement part of key contractors terms and conditions

Facilitating involvement

These are aspects of the work which are not themselves directly ‘involvement’ or ‘participation’. However if established they will facilitate and encourage tenants to be involved

- Associated with the above – development and maintenance of a tenant involvement register
- Draw up a and assess a creative range of locations for engagement where tenants go in their daily lives, such as betting shops, supermarkets/corner shops, voluntary group offices

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|-------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Appendix C | Potential Training Courses | January 2009 |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|

| Training course | Designed for |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| General courses | |
| Representing the community | All |
| Getting Support | All – successfully bringing people into the participation network |
| Personal effectiveness / negotiating and influencing skills | All |

| Training course | Designed for |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Presentation skills | All |
| Communication Jungle | All – getting your point across effectively |
| Team Working | All |
| Resolving conflict | All |
| Partnership working | All |
| Dynamic Groups | All – how to create mixed, balanced groups and keep them vibrant |
| Train the Trainer | For those with a keen interest in training other residents |
| Effective surveys | All – basic principles of designing and carrying out surveys |
| Information Technology | |
| Using IT effectively | All |
| Microsoft Word | All - beginner, intermediate and advanced as required |
| Microsoft Excel | As above |
| Using the Internet | As above |
| Powerpoint | As above |
| Web design basics | Specifically aimed at residents who express interest in setting up and administering webpages |
| Meetings | |
| Effective Meetings | All |
| Chairing Meetings | Chairs or prospective chairs of formal structures |
| Successful Secretaries | People who are administering meetings |
| Videoconferencing for Beginners | All – the protocols of and getting effective VC meetings |
| Time management | All |
| Effective Roadshows | All |
| Finance and Procurement | |
| Balancing the Books | Finance for beginners (basic) for individual residents or groups holding funds directly |
| Introduction to Council Budgets | All |
| Sourcing and Winning External Funding | Groups who are looking for additional resources to run their services |
| Finance for Treasurers | Advanced training for people managing larger budgets |
| Introduction to Procurement | All |
| Specification and Tendering | For those on contract boards |
| Contract performance management | For those on contract boards |
| Equality and Diversity | |
| Equality and Diversity awareness | All |
| Disability Awareness | All |
| Race Equality | All - exploring cultures, differences and |

| Training course | Designed for |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | stereotypes |
| Equality Impact Assessment | Those with specific interest in reviewing venues and working practices. More advanced. |
| Working with Difference | All - how to work effectively in meetings etc with different cultures and abilities |
| Recruitment and selection | |
| Designing job descriptions | Specifically for those involved in recruitment activities |
| Interviewing skills | As above |
| Effective selection panels | As above |
| Inspection | |
| Mystery shopping | All interested in this activity |
| Inspecting Your Council – Basic | An introduction to how to review services |
| Inspecting Your Council – Advanced | Advanced training on inspection processes – for specific purposes |
| Scrutiny for Beginners | Specifically for anyone on a residents’ scrutiny panel |
| Peer Assessor | For residents involved in peer review teams such as IDeA |
| Performance Management | |
| Plans, plans and more plans | All – information about how the council plans its activities using the Local Strategic Partnership, corporate and service plans |
| Best Value Reviewing | Aimed at people involved in detail of reviewing and changing service delivery |
| Goal setting and action planning | All involved in formal structures |
| Managing performance | All involved in formal structures |
| Managing projects | All involved in formal structures |
| Housing | |
| Dealing with anti-social behaviour | All |
| Repairs and maintenance | All |
| Allocation and lettings | All |
| Certificate in Community Action | |
| Introduction to Tenant Management | For groups who want to directly manage small-scale assets |
| Tenant Management Cooperatives | For groups aspiring to take over blocks of housing |
| Where does my rent go? | All |
| Other courses | |
| Introduction to | All – Introductory courses on all the councils major service areas eg Planning, Social Care, Parking and Transport, Revenues and Benefits, Economic Development, Environment, Democratic Processes, etc |
| Development Control and Probity | Anyone specifically involved in the detail of |

| Training course | Designed for |
|-----------------|--------------|
| | Planning |