

# The Customer Panel

## End of Year Summary

Thankyou to all of you who completed and returned feedback over the last year for the Customer Panel. We believe that service improvements cannot be fully effective unless residents' views are incorporated and the views we receive through the Panel are vital. This leaflet briefly summarises the main consultation that have been carried out since April 1st 2006. For more information on any of the projects consulted on through the Customer Panel, please contact the Policy Helpline on 020 7021 4457 or [policy.helpline@peabody.org.uk](mailto:policy.helpline@peabody.org.uk)

### 1. Rent Arrears Policy and Procedure

85 % of you felt that the revised rent arrears letters and policy that we used were clear and easy to understand; whilst 90% felt that our rent arrears leaflet contains the correct information.

“The section on tolerated trespasser is well thought out and written in good plain English.”

Other comments you made were:

- More information should be given about the services provided by the Revenues Team, not just the recovery of arrears. Prevention is key to arrears should have early direct contact; and
- More information on clearing arrears and setting up new tenancies is needed and more information on housing benefits overpayments, arrears for sub-units and former tenant arrears would be useful.

#### WHAT WE HAVE CHANGED

- ✓ The Tenant Support Team number is now included in rent arrears letters, leaflets and on the website; and
- ✓ We have reduced the number of stages involved in the recovery of rent arrears.

### 2. Service Promises

80% felt that we needed to make improvements to our repairs and maintenance standards and 90% felt that it is a good idea to have clear service standards that are monitored regularly, enforced and used to shape our services.

“Setting standards on partnership working with the Police and local authorities is important. Police and PCSO's on estates are very good and very welcome.”

Other comments were:

- Standards for dealing with hate crimes and domestic violence should ensure that the problem is dealt with as soon as possible; and

- Regular estate walkabouts are good to maintain the standard of the estates

#### WHAT WE HAVE CHANGED

- ✓ A clear set of service standards, rather than promises, that staff can work to and the introduction of a repairs turnaround team tasked to make significant improvements to the repairs service have been set up.

### 3. The Business Plan

60% felt that we are improving our customer focus, but more improvements are needed. A further 80% felt it was important to strengthen the life chances of residents whilst maintaining a cost effective business.

“A decent home for all residents to live in is a good goal. New homes are important as there are still a lot of people who need affordable housing in London.”

Other comments were:

- Because sustainability is such an important issue, it is a really positive step building this into the business plan; and
- Customer service has improved vastly this year due to developing staff.

#### WHAT WE HAVE CHANGED

- ✓ The business plan has been implemented and organisational changes made to introduce a more customer-focussed structure to the organisation;

### 4. Peabody Times

80% of you felt that something needed to be done to encourage more people to read it. 75% felt that the design was good but a more up to date layout was necessary.

“The paper needs to have a balance between positive practice and headline grabbing news.”

Some of the other comments made were:

- A report on the main staff changes quarterly across the Trust in the Peabody Times would be helpful;
- Estate Managers should be introduced in the Peabody Times; and
- External policy changes and anything that would affect residents should be included.

#### WHAT WE HAVE CHANGED

✓ The Trust has changed the layout of the Peabody Times so that is more reader-friendly. Different sections are more clearly set out and the design has been modernised from the summer edition.

## 5. Parking review

90% of the Customer Panel members we asked stated that they preferred clamping rather than ticketing as a penalty for unauthorised parking and 100% told us that no Statutory off-Road Notices (SORN) should be allowed on estates to avoid abandoned cars.

“My estate has improved a lot since the Trust employed a contractor to remove all the abandoned vehicles.”

Other comments that were made were:

- Bays and spaces should be advertised for residents in Peabody Times and on the Internet for low demand areas firstly before offering to the public.
- A regular business health check should be carried out with the parking contractor-in line with our service level agreement.

#### WHAT WE HAVE CHANGED

✓ A full parking policy review is being undertaken by Neighbourhood Services and will be rolled out in May. Comments made by customer panel members have shaped the review and put certain topics as a priority;

✓ Policy changes to make parking rules more clear have been made as a result of Customer Panel recommendations.

## 6. Tenancy Agreement Review

Overall, you were positive about the revised draft format, especially the glossary. Customer Panel members were very supportive of the clearer conditions on abandoned goods and in favour of former arrears being transferred. Also, you felt that tenants should only move with arrears in exceptional circumstances. The majority of you were in favour of clearer conditions on repairs and you had

concerns about how and when pets are kept and how we deal with nuisance caused by pets.

“The new draft tenancy agreements seem clear and well explained. The new format means that it is informative and easy to understand.”

Some of the other comments you made were:

- The new draft agreement is a lot clearer and in plainer English. This makes it easier to understand the technical parts of the tenancy;
- Taking a stronger line on non-tenants is better.

#### WHAT WE HAVE CHANGED

✓ The revised draft tenancy agreements have been modified to reflect some of the comments made in the review;

✓ The wording of the draft agreements has been made clearer. Vibrations were added to the noise nuisance clause and mopeds and scooters were added to the list of obstructions for communal areas and we have also included pets fouling under the conditions on communal and shared areas;

✓ New terms have been added to the glossary for the draft tenancy agreements to make it easier to read and understand;

## 7. Choice Based Lettings

88% of you said that you were in favour of keeping the 12 month minimum tenure before being able to apply for a transfer through CBL. Another 88% also felt that they would prefer training and information about how to use CBL through an information leaflet.

“This is a very good idea and would give residents a much clearer idea of where they could choose.”

Other comments you made were:

- Properties on the smaller estates should also be included;
- Information should be made available and accessible for vulnerable tenants.

#### WHAT WE HAVE CHANGED

✓ The Trust are tendering for a company to provide the I.T. system for Choice-Based Lettings. Some changes were made to how information will be given out from comments made by Customer Panel members;

✓ Vulnerable residents will have free access to information on choice based lettings once it is introduced.