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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b> 13
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>4 OCTOBER 2001</b>	<b>CATEGORY: DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>	<b>OPEN PARAGRAPH N/A</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>LYNN CHILD (EXT 5823)</b>	<b>DOC:</b> c:/myfiles/tenant participation/committee report.doc
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>TENANT PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>REF: LC</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: CS6</b>

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### **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 Members are requested to receive details of the current position with regards to Tenant Participation.
- 1.2 That Members approve the change of use of 54 Bass's Crescent, Castle Gresley to a Tenant Resource Centre on a 12 month rent-free basis.
- 1.3 That Members approve the proposals at Annexe B to amend the existing Tenant Participation Structure.
- 1.4 Members are requested to receive details of the current position with regards to Section 16 Option Studies being carried out in areas of South Derbyshire.

### **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To advise Members of the current position with regards to Tenant Participation.
- 2.2 To obtain Members' approval to use 54 Bass's Crescent, Castle Gresley as a Resource Centre for Tenants and to provide this rent-free for the first 12 months.
- 2.3 To obtain Members' agreement to amend the existing Tenant Participation Structure in line with the suggestions made by the Tenants Advisory and Consultation Team (TACT).
- 2.4 To advise Members of the current position with regards to Section 16 Option Studies being carried out in areas of South Derbyshire.

### **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 Currently there are 2 tenant associations in South Derbyshire; Linton Tenants Association and Melbourne District Tenants Association. TACT has a membership of 16, comprising tenants from Melbourne, Linton, Walton on Trent, Midway, Newhall,

Swadlincote Church Gresley and Shardlow. They presently meet every 3 weeks in order to discuss the open reports prior to Community Services Committee and to discuss other issues relevant to Housing Services. Members of TACT are currently involved in Best Value reviews, the Housing Investment Programme, HRA Business Plan, Supporting People in South Derbyshire Forum and numerous other issues.

- 3.2 At the Housing & Environment Committee meeting on 6 April 2000 Members agreed to investigations taking place into the possibility of starting a Tenant Resource Centre. Due to the increase in tenant involvement in South Derbyshire the need for a Resource Centre has become more urgent. Tenants need an office base to enable them to produce printed material such as newsletters, minutes, agendas and photocopying facilities so that material can be distributed. Most tenants require help/training in the production of these items.
- 3.3 South Derbyshire's Tenant Participation Agreement states that the council will provide access to office equipment and facilities to tenants and it is the role of the Tenant Participation Officer (TPO) to help tenants who require assistance. Due to the openness of the office where the TPO works from and the sensitive nature of material and discussions which take place in that office, it is not possible for tenants to use any of the office facilities.
- 3.4 The next step was to identify a suitable property for the Resource Centre. A check of the Void Property Register showed that a ground floor bedsit at Bass's Crescent, Castle Gresley and a first floor one bedroom flat at Pine Grove, Newhall had both been vacant since June 2000. Members of TACT visited both properties. They concluded that as Pine Grove had no lift, access for disabled tenants would be difficult therefore they would like to progress with 54 Bass's Crescent.
- 3.5 The flat is part of Bass's Crescent sheltered housing scheme, which consists of 24 units of either bedsit or one bed flats based on two floors. The scheme currently has 12 vacancies and it is highly likely that this figure will increase, as applicants do not wish to be considered for accommodation where a bathroom is shared and the lift only allows access to a part of the first floor.
- 3.6 54 Bass's Crescent consists of a kitchen, living/sleeping area, storage cupboard and toilet with walk-in storage area. The property would offer tenants a base to access the facilities as mentioned above and to gain some independence.
- 3.7 The property would be leased to a management committee who would have responsibility for managing the Resource Centre. The committee would initially be given a budget with which to manage the operational aspects of the centre (i.e. purchasing of stationary etc), however until the committee is set up and fully constitutionalised, the Council would need to assist in the running and setting up costs of the centre. Consequently it would be necessary for the Council to provide the centre cost free in respect of rent, and assist in the setting up and running costs via the existing Tenant Participation budget. Details of the expected outlay are itemised at Annexe A.
- 3.8 It is anticipated that once the committee is fully constituted, that external funding may be accessed in order to assist in the running of the centre in future years. Other sources of funding may come from providing services from the centre, including photocopying or use of the room for local surgeries or advice days. These arrangements would be reviewed towards the end of the first year of operation and reported back to the Community Services Committee as a progress report and if additional funding is being requested.

- 3.9 As part of the consultation and planning exercise carried out for the setting up of a Resource Centre a number of issues have been considered as detailed at Annexe A. These include consultation with the existing tenants who currently occupy 12 of the units, Health and Safety and Planning.
- 3.10 As stated previously a committee will be set up in order to manage the centre and to access external funding. Without a constituted committee, funding is almost impossible to access. This has made it clear that the current Tenant Participation (TP) structure will not meet the tenants future needs. TACT currently has no constitution and has no formal committee in place. The Tenant Participation Officer in consultation with TACT has examined the existing structure and in order to make TACT more self-sufficient it is clear that a constituted committee needs to be put into place.
- 3.11 The existing Tenant Participation structure includes the 15 Area Tenant Meetings that are held twice a year. It has become clear whilst servicing these meetings that managing 15 meetings is too time consuming, especially as some of these meetings are either not attended or only a very small number of tenants turn up which is a waste of the existing resources.
- 3.12 Taking into account the problems with the existing structure, proposals are put forward which will fine tune the existing arrangements to ensure that the structure is flexible to enable all tenants to have access to some forum of participation and at the level that is comfortable to them.
- 3.13 The new structure will consist of TACT being formed into a Federation, with a sub-group who will manage the Resource Centre. In order to manage more effectively the Area Tenant Meetings these are being divided into 8 distinct Area Tenant Group's, and within these groups a range of Tenant Associations and Tenant's Voices as Tenant Participation develops. Tenants' Voices are representatives from areas where it may not be possible to set up a Tenants Association because of the lack of numbers within the area or the lack of interest from residents. Details of the new structure are detailed at Annexe B.
- 3.14 As you will see from the structure chart detailed at Annexe C, a number of the Area Tenant Groups already have Tenant Associations or representatives on TACT. In order to assist these groups or representatives to develop within their area, officers from Housing Services, local ward members and members from TACT have met with a number of Section 16 Agencies. Section 16 Agencies are approved agencies who carry out work with tenants and are funded by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions' (DLTR) Tenant Empowerment Grant. Following the series of meetings, the tenants have decided to appoint F.I.R.S.T. Call Housing Consultants to carry out Option Studies in Walton on Trent, Linton, Midway and Melbourne.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The only part of the report that has financial implications is the approval to provide 54 Bass's Crescent as a Tenant Resource Centre on a rent free basis including the standard heating charge. Whilst the weekly rent for this property is £54.27 (including £5.86 heating charge) as it has been void since June 2000 there has been no rent income for the last 15 months. All other costs will be met from the existing Tenant Participation budget. The change of use will mean that the council foregoes the

opportunity to achieve rent income from this currently void property over the next months.

## **5.0 Corporate Implications**

5.1 There are no Corporate implications.

## **6.0 Community Implications**

6.1 The proposal will strengthen Tenant Participation in South Derbyshire which will have a direct impact on communities.

## **7.0 Background Papers**

7.1 Reports to Housing and Environment Committee dated 6 April 2000, Agenda item 10 and 8 February 2001, Agenda item 11.