

Summary of the Independent Tenants' Advisors Report

In order to ensure the options appraisal was carried out in an open and clear manner, Open Communities Ltd were appointed as Independent Tenants' Advisors to provide impartial advice and guidance to tenants and to oversee the consultation process. They have now produced their final report and their summary is reproduced below.

At the conclusion of the Housing Options Appraisal, the Housing Options Panel and the Tenants Consultative Panel can be assured that tenants and leaseholders have been provided with the impartial knowledge and support that has enabled them to **make a clear, informed choice about their future housing options.**

The Housing Options Panel has considered all relevant facts and recommended to Warrington Borough Council that Housing Stock Transfer to Golden Gates Housing, as a newly formed stand alone RSL be pursued as the option most likely to meet the objectives agreed during the Options Appraisal process.

Open Communities has provided the support, training and expertise to assure tenants that they have **identified the way forward that delivers the best possible deal for them**, taking into account the particular circumstances and issues of Warrington.

Furthermore, each individual tenant and leaseholder has had the opportunity to discuss, at a one to one level, the pros and cons of each option **in clear understandable terms.**

Open Communities has worked with the tenants and residents of Warrington to ensure that **tenants are in the driving seat** of the future decision making process.

Open Communities can confirm that the Options Appraisal process has been **robust, followed appropriate guidance and has been thorough**, particularly in steps taken to involve the wider body of tenants in the Appraisal.



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Have your say

Why not attend the next Tenants Consultative Panel meeting!

The meeting will focus on tenants discussing the next steps in the process pending the councils decision in December.

The meeting will be held in the Council Chamber at **Warrington Town Hall on Tuesday 25 November 2008 at 10.30am.** It will finish approximately 1pm. Lunch and refreshments will be provided, plus a payment to cover expenses.

Please contact the Housing Options Team on freephone 0800 9529942 if you wish to attend or have any queries.

Hopefully see you there

If you require this document in large print or on audio tape please call freephone 0800 952 9942

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TENANTS AT THE FOREFRONT

After many months of careful and thorough examination of the facts and figures behind the issues for the future of your homes the Housing Options Panel has made its recommendation.

When it began its work in April the panel, consisting of equal numbers of tenants, Councillors and GGH employees, set out to ensure that when they made their decision they would only do so if armed with all the knowledge they needed.

In the process that has followed they have been able to examine all aspects including:

- The financial position the Council faces
- The condition of the housing stock
- The rights of tenants
- Rents under each of the options
- How employees will be affected
- The opportunity for all tenants to get their homes brought up to a modern standard

What's inside this issue of Your Home Your Views?

- Housing Options Panel – Tenant's quotes**
- Where We Go From Here Making Their Voice Heard**
- Tenants Conference - Workshop Feedback**
- Independent Tenants Advisors Report**

The Panel has now finished its deliberations and decided unanimously to recommend to the Council that:

- **The housing stock should be transferred to a local independent Registered Social Landlord; and**
- **That Golden Gates Housing should be transformed to be that organisation.**

It is now up to the Council to consider this recommendation. (see where we go from here)

Housing Options Panel

Tenants quotes



"With tenants' expectations continuously increasing, it was important that the Housing Options Panel looked for the best option to meet tenants aspirations in the future. The recommendation for stock transfer will ensure that tenants homes will be maintained at a higher standard than the current decent homes standard." **Doreen Moors (Chair)**

"I found the whole experience of being a member of the housing options panel very interesting and was able to make a recommendation on the information provided and had the answers to all my questions explained in a clear and straightforward manner by both the Consultant Gerald Davies and the Independent Tenant Advisor Jamie Martin and his team from Open Communities. The recommendation was considered to be the best for all Council tenants and will ensure more money is secured for investment in properties and the environment" **Tom Senior**



"It has been both exciting and challenging serving on the HOP panel. I have learned a lot about housing. The panel has now made its final recommendation and we feel we have made the best decision for all tenants and for the whole of the Borough" **Jean Bullock**



"I found the whole appraisal process very interesting and enjoyable. The information that we were given allowed us to consider all the possible options thoroughly before we made our recommendation" **Paul Maudsley**



"I thoroughly enjoyed being involved in the housing options panel. The process included a range of information and the support given to us by Gerald Davies, the Consultant and Jamie Martin from Open Communities, the Independent Tenant Advisor was invaluable. I am totally satisfied that the final recommendation made by the Housing Options Panel is the right one for the future of all Warrington tenants" **Jean Stringer**

Where we go from here

Now the Housing Options Panel has made its recommendation it is for the Council to consider the way forward.

This has a number of stages which are:

- a **report** setting out all the aspects of the Housing Options Appraisal will be drawn up
- this will be considered by the Council's **Executive Board** in November
- all Councillors will then debate the issues and come to a decision at a full meeting of the **Council** in December

Once the Council has made its decision the report will be submitted to the **Government Office for the North West** (based in Manchester)

Their job is to ensure that the process has been properly carried out and that the agreed way forward makes good sense in light of all the circumstances. Key to their examination will be the extent to which tenants have been at the heart of the process and that all tenants have had the opportunity to make their voices heard.

Making their voice heard

Report of the Tenants' Conference

On the 18th September almost one hundred tenants gathered at the Gateway centre for an all day conference which was open to all council tenants.

The proceedings were opened by the Council's Chief Executive – Diana Terris – who stressed the importance of the event to the Council and that the contributions made to the discussions were valuable to the Housing Options Appraisal process.



Next those present heard an address by the Council's Project Manager who explained in detail all the issues relating to the appraisal.

Diana Terris, the Council's Chief Executive welcomes tenants to the conference



After a lively question and answer session the participants went into small discussion groups to consider their hopes and concerns.

The outcomes of the various sessions at the conference are available on the Council's web-site with some of them elsewhere in this newsletter.

All-in-all there was a strong sense of enthusiasm throughout and the feedback from those who attended showed a high level of satisfaction with the day.

Tenants' Conference – Workshop Feedback

18th September 2008

During the conference tenants were asked for their concerns regarding the future should there be no change in the way council housing was managed and also if stock transfer took place. Their main concerns are summarised below:

No change to council housing	Stock transfer
Deterioration of housing stock	New landlord may not be locally based
Quality of life goes down	How will tenants be involved in decision making processes
Uncertainty of environmental and outside repairs being done	Won't know how new landlord operates if not GGH
No money for repairs or improvements	Would there be job losses?
Possible job losses	How would tenants rights be affected
Lack of investment from council in Warrington	Would there be sufficient funds for all the improvements
Remain in housing debt	What about leaseholder's rights?
No new building of homes	Security of tenure

In the second workshop tenants discussed the positives and negatives for each of the possible housing management options.

Council takes stock back in house	
Positives	Negatives
Familiar	No more money
Same Staff	Works will not be done
	Loss of tenant involvement

Remain as an ALMO	
Positives	Negatives
Proven track record	No more money
Good services	Repairs reduced
Tenants involved	No improvements to homes

Remain as an ALMO-self financing model	
Positives	Negatives
Same staff	Increases debt overall
Would keep all rental income	No improvement works

Stock Transfer to RSL	
Positives	Negatives
More money for improvements/repairs	Wouldn't report to WBC
Tenant involvement	Could be changes
Would keep all rental income	May not be local if not GGH
Would stay local proven track	Set up costs
Record if GGH became RSL	

In the next edition answers will be given to these issues