

London Tenants Federation

Annual Report

2008 - 09



Sharing, exchanging and engaging in housing policy and strategy:

LTF general meetings have provided opportunities for representatives of London's borough-wide council tenant federations and organisations to discuss together national and regional housing policies and strategies and how they impact at the borough and local level.

Debate on national issues has focused this year on the Government's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) review, the new Tenants Advisory Service and the National Tenants Voice.

Abigail Davies, Head of policy at the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and Ruth Lucas, author of the Local Government Association's (LGA) 'My Rent went to Whitehall position paper' were invited to the LTF July 2008 general meeting. The meeting provoked lively debate on the Housing Revenue Account Review, the CIH's working forums, which were set up as part of the review and the LGA's early response to the review.

In December 2008 LTF delegates were invited by the Government's Communities and Local Government (CLG) to attend a meeting on the HRA Review with representatives of other regional tenants' organisations.

A Tenants Services Authority (TSA) representative attended the LTF general meeting in March '09 to discuss the TSA's new role as the regulator for housing association and co-operative' housing and its future role as regulator of council housing.

Debate on regional issues has focused on the Mayor of London's consultations on his 'Planning for a Better London' and draft London Housing Strategy.

With supporting briefing papers and a GLA Planning Team's power point presentation on the Mayor of London's 'Planning for a Better London', LTF members debated the key areas that the Mayor aims to address in his review of the London Plan in October 2008.

An officer of the GLA's housing and homelessness section gave a presentation at the LTF meeting in January 2009 on the first draft of the London Housing Strategy, published for consultation with London Assembly members in November 2008.

The LTF has run three additional meetings this year specifically on the draft London Housing Strategy. Two of these were hosted by LTF member organisations - Newham Tenants Federation and Hammersmith & Fulham Federation of TRAs. At both events tenant representatives of neighbouring boroughs were invited to attend.

A third larger meeting was held in Hackney with Hackney tenants involved in running one of the workshops. Tenant representatives from across London attended. The meeting was organised in partnership with Shelter, Planning Aid for London and Just Space Planning Network. All provided speakers and workshop facilitators for the event. The GLA's Head of Housing and Homelessness gave a presentation on the London Housing Strategy and answered attendees questions.

Over the last year, LTF has organised meetings for tenants representatives of South West and North London's sub-regions with speakers from the sub-regional housing partnerships, the GLA and voluntary sector organisations. The meetings discussed how sub-regional housing partnerships operate and the relationships between housing and planning policies and strategies at the borough, sub-regional and regional levels.

Responding to consultations:

LTF was the only tenants organisation to make a formal response at the early stages of the Government's review of the Housing Revenue Account. With formal consultation likely to take place soon on proposals from the review, LTF members aim to respond collectively and individually to this.

LTF made a formal response to consultation on the Mayor's 'Planning for a Better London'

and is gearing up now to respond to the consultation on the draft London Housing Strategy. It is organising a conference in July on the London Plan to prepare LTF members to respond to the draft London Plan consultation which will be published in the autumn.

Representation at the regional level:

LTF delegates of the Mayor's Housing Forum and its Community Engagement Sub-Group have continued to work hard in their efforts to make the voice of London's tenants heard at the regional level, particularly around the London Housing Strategy. This is not an easy task given that tenants and voluntary sector representatives are far out numbered by housing providers and government officials at the forum. LTF's delegates are elected annually at LTF Annual General Meetings.

Building links:

LTF continues to build links with other tenant and voluntary sector organisations. Since joining the London Civic Forum (LCF) soon after last year's AGM, LTF delegates have regularly attended LCF's Just Space Planning Network meetings.

Voluntary sector organisations have taken part in our meetings as speakers and workshop facilitators. Our London Housing Strategy meeting held in Hackney (mentioned on p2) was one of the most successful of them. Members of the GLA's Equalities Standing Group were also involved with the event and assisted in facilitating a workshop.

The London Voluntary Sector Council carried out a case study on the LTF this year which it posted on its website. Since attending our Hackney London Housing Strategy event, its Policy and Network Development Officer has encouraged other LVSC member organisations to respond to consultation on the draft London Housing Strategy.

LTF hosted one of the regional tenants' representatives meeting this year. Housing association and co-operative tenants that LTF has made links with, are routinely invited to LTF open meetings and conferences.

Positive links have been made with the coordinators of two of London's sub-regions.

And more:

LTF members have worked this year with a young film maker (who is also council tenant) to produce a video aimed at challenging negative and stereotyped views of council tenants, which we aim to put on www.youtube.com

LTF has been asked to review a book, in its bi-monthly newsletter, edited by Sarah Glynn and published by Pluto Press entitled 'How the other half lives'

LTF is working on a communications strategy to better facilitate democratic debate on regional housing issues and accountability to LTF member federations and organisations.

Funding:

A successful application was made to London Councils grants committee for a 4-year grant starting in October 2008 to enable London tenants to engage in the regional housing agenda, effectively enabling the LTF to continue the work it was doing previously when funded by London Council's Housing Steering Group. LTF's grant is paid through Camden Federation of TRAs, who also provide an office space for the LTF part-time worker and access to a large meeting space for LTF general meetings.

LTF has used this year a small GLA grant of £1,499 (although allocated prior to the change in the London Mayor in May of last year) to facilitate additional consultation on the London Housing Strategy and encourage more responses from tenants' organisations

London Tenants Federation is an umbrella organisation, bringing together London's borough wide council tenants federations and organisations. It aims to provide a strong regional voice for London's council tenants.

It does not aim to supersede any of its member organisations, but rather to strengthen them by bringing them together to share and exchange information, to respond to consultation and at times to campaign.

LTF has representation on the Mayors Housing Forum and chairs its community engagement sub group.

LTF is a democratic and accountable organisation that operates by consensus.

Representatives of its member federations and organisations are elected in their own boroughs and accountable to tenants in their own boroughs. Each federation and organisation is of equal importance to the LTF.

LTF has links with many other tenants' organisations; of various tenures, regional, national and international. It has positive links with other regional voluntary sector organisations who have an interest in housing.

London Leaseholders Network is an associate member of LTF.

LTF has a part-time coordinator / support worker.

Many LTF members as well as our worker devote large numbers of voluntary hours to the work of London Tenants Federation. It is as a result of this that LTF continues to grow in strength and influence.