

**Consulting and engaging tenants, residents and hard
to reach groups in the Regional Agenda**

**Report of the Community Engagement Task Force
to the Mayor's Housing Forum**

Final report

December 2006

Foreword by Karen Buck, MP for Regents Park and Kensington North

The importance of local communities cannot be overstated. People and their local communities are at the heart of everything we do, no matter whether we work in local or central government, for a housing association, a charity or any other organisation.

Giving local people more influence and power to improve their lives and bring about the changes they want to see is the right thing to do. This is what motivated everyone who contributed to the Community Engagement Taskforce (CET).

Tenant engagement is also a plan of central government's drive to rebalance their relationship with local communities and local government (and other local public service providers). This is reflected in the recent Local Government White Paper, "Strong and Prosperous Communities" - which amongst other things promotes wider community engagement and tenants' satisfaction as ways of delivering better public services, building civil renewal and sustaining local communities.

It is good to see housing stakeholders taking the agenda for involving communities in how their neighbourhoods are run very seriously. It is also right that tenants and residents should shape the agenda, especially given the rapidly changing nature of housing, such as the Mayor's new housing powers.

To ensure London's residents are engaged in future decisions on London-wide housing issues the CET was set up, at the beginning of 2006, by the Housing Forum for London (now the Mayors Housing Forum), which included representatives from local authorities, housing associations, tenant and resident organisations and voluntary sector bodies as well as the Mayor.

The CET was charged with commissioning and overseeing research to understand where the gaps in tenant consultation structures and to make recommendations for how best to develop appropriate ways to improve tenant and resident engagement across all tenures in regional strategic housing issues.

The research has shown lots of excellent practice but as always there is still much to do. More needs to be done to facilitate residents' engagement in the regional agenda, especially for groups, such as the homeless, and residents of the private sector who are poorly represented by formal engagement structures due to the changing nature of the sector.

Overall, the work undertaken by the CET shows that more tenants and leaseholders should be better represented on regional strategic housing bodies, such as the Mayor's Housing Forum sub-groups. It is also clear that the awareness of London's residents about the regional agenda must be raised in order to build the capacity of residents to participate and understand London housing issues and to make their input meaningful.

London's housing stakeholders should not be complacent as there is a way to go. This report will provide a useful starting point. There are lots of opportunities ahead – the Mayor's forthcoming housing strategy is one amongst many others. I look forward to seeing the good work of the CET and the examples of good practice contained in this report being rolled out. The end result, I hope, will be greater involvement of local people in the regional agenda.

Karen Buck

Chair of the Community Engagement Taskforce
(MP for Regent's Park and Kensington North)

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Acknowledgements

The Community Engagement Task Force (CET) has prepared this report. The Task Force comprised:

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Trevor Hankins	Guinness Trust Residents Group
Julia Atkins	Housing Corporation
Berwyn Kinsey	London Housing Federation
George Fry	London Tenants' Federation

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The Task Force was co-ordinated and supported by Beatrice Maunder and Alice Ellison from London Councils.

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Recognition should also be given to Susy Lloyd of Solon Community Network who undertook much of the commissioned research.

This final report was prepared by Helen Cope.

Executive summary

Involving tenants in decisions over how their neighbourhoods are managed is now central to housing policy. This has been reinforced recently by the publication of the local government White Paper.¹ The Rt. Hon Ruth Kelly - Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has emphasised, in recent speeches, the need for strong leadership combined with processes that enable and empower citizens to engage in decision-making that impacts upon their communities. This reflects ministerial support for the double devolution agenda, i.e. devolved power from the centre bringing about local empowerment and community ownership. Tenants and residents must have a role in shaping the agenda given the rapidly changing nature of housing and regional policy.

In the light of these changes, the Community Engagement Task Force (CET) was established in 2006, as a time-limited sub-group of the Housing Forum for London (now the Mayor's Housing Forum). The CET was charged with commissioning and overseeing research to understand how best to deliver and develop appropriate structures for tenant and resident engagement in regional issues.

Evidence was heard and received from a number of interested parties and twelve pieces of research commissioned. All are available separately from London Councils. This report is the summary report of the CET.

The CET examined engagement across all tenures including local authorities, housing associations, the private rented sector and hard to reach groups including homeless people and people from black and minority ethnic communities.

The CET found that:

- Both housing association and council tenants and residents have a keen interest in the regional agenda and welcomed the opportunity to give their views providing there is genuine opportunity to influence the debate;
- London boroughs have highly developed well-resourced, formal and informal tenant participation structures. These facilitate the involvement of a core group of tenants, and offer the potential for all tenants to be involved in decision-making locally and borough-wide; operationally and strategically
- Housing associations have fewer means of formal engagement, and are more reliant on informal mechanisms.;
- The majority of London boroughs have borough-wide forums for their tenants and leaseholders, these could form the foundation for engaging residents of all tenures in future;
- In due course, cross borough structures could emerge by extending the good practice already being developed by some boroughs whose structures include representatives from housing associations;
- A significant gap in provision is that there is no equivalent for the housing association sector of the London Tenants Federation which operates on a pan-London basis in the interests of local authority tenants;
- There are no sub-regional engagement structures;

¹ Strong and Prosperous Communities (DCLG October 2006)

- Private rented sector engagement requires a separate stream of activity based upon networks of advice and other agencies using informal and ad hoc, rather than formal methods of engagement.
- A similar approach is required for hard to reach groups.

Community engagement will require proper resources, to ensure that Londoners from all tenures and hard to reach groups, including homeless people and people from BME communities, are enabled to engage in regional policy and strategy. In order to facilitate this, further investigations are needed to ascertain whether central or regional government should provide funding for this activity or whether some current borough spending on community engagement could be pooled across London and refocused on engaging residents in the regional agenda. There is also the need to consider whether all social tenants and leaseholders should contribute to a “residents levy” to help facilitate such engagement.

Stakeholders should commit to a monitoring framework which could be overseen by a sub-group of the Mayor’s Housing Forum. Any such sub-group would need to set out clear specific performance indicators and a performance management framework, to take forward the recommendations of the Taskforce and drive the agenda forward to for the longer term

Sub regional engagement needs to be developed but in the short-term officer forums should be built upon, by disseminating information and consulting with residents, especially in the private rented sector.

The CET report offers mechanisms that will enable immediate and short-term engagement to take place in the light of the forthcoming Mayor’s Housing Strategy consultations. It also sets out a longer-term model based on the following principles:

That:

- Current good practice should be strengthened, to build structures in an organic rather than revolutionary fashion, over time;
- It should utilise both formal and informal methods of engagement;
- Tenants and residents should have some say in developing structures and that they are not imposed upon them;
- Any model should adopt a pyramid form, working from the grass roots upwards.
- All other actions and recommendations flow from this.

The diversity of housing association structures for engagement is recognised. This includes local, regional and national tenant and resident structures, resident board members, service/performance review panels, focus groups and other such consumerist approaches. The sector is encouraged to commit to a conference for residents on regional issues and engagement mechanisms, which would make the best use of this range of approaches in a regional scenario.

Housing associations should also consider approaching members with a view to funding a Tenant Development Officer within the London Housing Federation, to take forward proposals to develop borough-wide structures for housing association tenant and resident engagement as, for example, in Hammersmith and Fulham.

This will enable housing association tenant and resident representatives and organisations to discuss and be consulted on strategic housing issues.

These structures would coalesce better with council engagement structures and improve information flows and consultation from boroughs and the London Housing Federation. In the longer term, it is the aim of the CET that these structures will develop into a pan-London body such as the London Tenant Federation and the two organisations could potentially merge. Representatives from such bodies could then act as resident representatives at regional meetings.

Recommendations

All tenures

1. The Mayor's Housing Forum (MHF) should enable longer-term strategies and further development by creating a sub-group to oversee and develop a community engagement action plan. The London Tenants Federation, Brent Private Tenants Rights Group and a housing association representative should be appropriately represented on this sub-group. In the short term, the sub-group should develop a work programme that maximises opportunities to influence the development of the Mayor's Housing Strategy.
2. The GLA will ensure that its consultation strategy for the Mayor's Housing Strategy raises awareness and increases knowledge of London regional housing issues, using the Mayor's existing well-developed range of mechanisms for consultation and other mechanisms outlined in the report. For example, London Councils, the sub-regions and LHF networks and other existing networks, such as the London Tenants Federation as well as using Mayoral communication resources such as 'The Londoner' newspaper.
3. Engagement structures should take pyramid form building from the grass roots at borough level upwards, with boroughs championing local engagement across the tenures and sub-regions engaging with residents in their areas.
4. The community engagement sub-group should investigate the resource requirements required to adequately facilitate community engagement and explore the need to build capacity across all sectors.

Residents of local authorities and housing associations (tenants and leaseholders)

5. Housing associations should work alongside the boroughs to create borough-wide cross tenure TRAs which will include residents (tenants and leaseholders) of housing associations in accordance with existing models in Newham, Brent and Croydon (who recently won a Beacon award for resident engagement). Methods of engagement can also include residents' scrutiny panels and conferences. It is acknowledged, however, that existing LA borough-wide forums have often been developed through lengthy consultation with tenants and are detailed in tenant compacts. Approaches adopted will therefore be diverse and developed in consultation with all tenants, including federations of LA and housing association tenants

6. Housing associations should consider making contributions to meeting the cost of a tenant development officer (TDO) to take this work forward at a borough level. An example of good practice exists in Hammersmith and Fulham; they have a borough forum for housing association a tenant, which brings together housing association tenants across the borough to share ideas and resources, giving them a voice and has links to the borough-wide TRA.
7. Feedback to the Mayor's Housing Forum will required from those leading consultations with the different tenure groups and also back to those tenants and residents consulted from the consulting organisations. This should be regular and clear. Local authorities, housing associations and others should report to the sub-regions by borough. The sub-region should then assemble the outcomes and report to the MHF. The sub-regions should then feedback outcomes with assistance from the London Councils and the LHF to those involved for dissemination to those groups consulted.

Private rented sector

8. A separate stream for engagement by private sector residents is required. Engagement of the private sector could become the responsibility of sub-regional Tenant Development Officers (perhaps supervised by sub-regional coordinators), which would build on the sub-regions' work on private sector renewal. The work of Brent Private Tenant Rights Group and model developed for the potential West London Private Tenants Network pilot and a possible pan-London forum offers a potential model dependent upon the review of the pilot.
9. TDOs and sub-regional co-coordinators should develop/build upon the embryonic networks of solicitors and advice agencies at borough level to develop a partnership that would enable consultation to take place across the private rented sector.

Hard to reach groups

10. The strategy for consulting with hard to reach groups should be developed in consultation with the Equalities Standing Group. This could build on existing borough structures which enable consultation with people with a range of diverse needs.
11. A range of informal approaches should be developed to engage the wider body of residents and especially hard to reach groups including homeless people and travellers in the development of the London Housing Strategy.

1 Introduction and context

- 1.1 This document is the final, summary report of the Community Engagement Task Force (CET) established as a time limited sub-group of the Housing Forum for London (which recently became the Mayor's Housing Forum). The CET was charged with examining and reporting on mechanisms for effectively engaging Londoners in regional strategy.
- 1.2 Given the rapidly changing nature of both national as well as regional housing policy with developments such as; the further separation of landlord and strategic roles, the introduction of choice and mobility, the transfer for housing and planning powers to the Mayor, the establishment of new growth areas and a national review of the future of social housing; it is even more important that residents are enabled to shape the agenda and engage in the debate.
- 1.3 The Rt. Hon Ruth Kelly MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government recently confirmed this view when announcing '*Strong and prosperous communities*' - the Local Government White Paper in October 2006. The White Paper offers more responsive services and empowered communities. In the London context this includes enabling Londoners to engage with the developing regional housing agenda.

Regional context

- 1.4 On 13 July 2006, the Government announced its proposals to give London's Mayor additional powers and responsibilities for housing in London. It is proposed that:
 - responsibilities of the London Housing Board will transfer to the Mayor;
 - the Mayor will prepare and publish a statutory London Housing Strategy and a strategic Housing Investment Plan, setting out the priorities to meet the housing needs of all Londoners;
 - the Mayor will decide the broad distribution of the affordable housing part of the Regional Housing Pot in line with the strategy. In short, the Mayor will decide in broad terms how public money for new affordable housing will be spent.
- 1.5 These proposals will require legislation in order to be enacted, and will form part of a Greater London Authority (GLA) Bill. In the interim, the Government intends to transfer to the Mayor responsibility for preparing a (non-statutory) strategy and making recommendations on housing capital investment to Government. It is envisaged that the GLA Bill will set out the processes and timescale for consultation on the Mayor's London Housing Strategy. The details of these are not yet known, although it is likely that - as with the Mayor's other statutory strategies - there will be some legal requirements.
- 1.6 In the meantime, the Mayor wants to ensure that he can quickly put in place the most efficient and inclusive consultative and engagement structures possible for assisting him to deliver his new responsibilities. As part of this process it is recommended that the Mayor's Housing Forum continues to support community engagement via a sub-group.

Purpose and approach of the Community Engagement Task Force (CET)

- 1.7 The London Housing Strategy 2005-16 (para 5.102) and its Delivery Plan state that work is needed to map the nature and extent of tenant and resident

participation across London (in all tenures), to better identify where gaps exist. The Strategy also contains a target of developing more appropriate structures for regional and strategic engagement with tenants and residents in all tenures.

- 1.8 In the light of this target, the CET was established early in 2006, as a time-limited sub-group of the then Housing Forum for London. The CET was charged with commissioning and overseeing research to understand these issues and to make recommendations. These should set out how to best deliver and develop appropriate structures for tenant and resident engagement in regional policy, at the sub-regional and regional and strategic levels.

Definitions

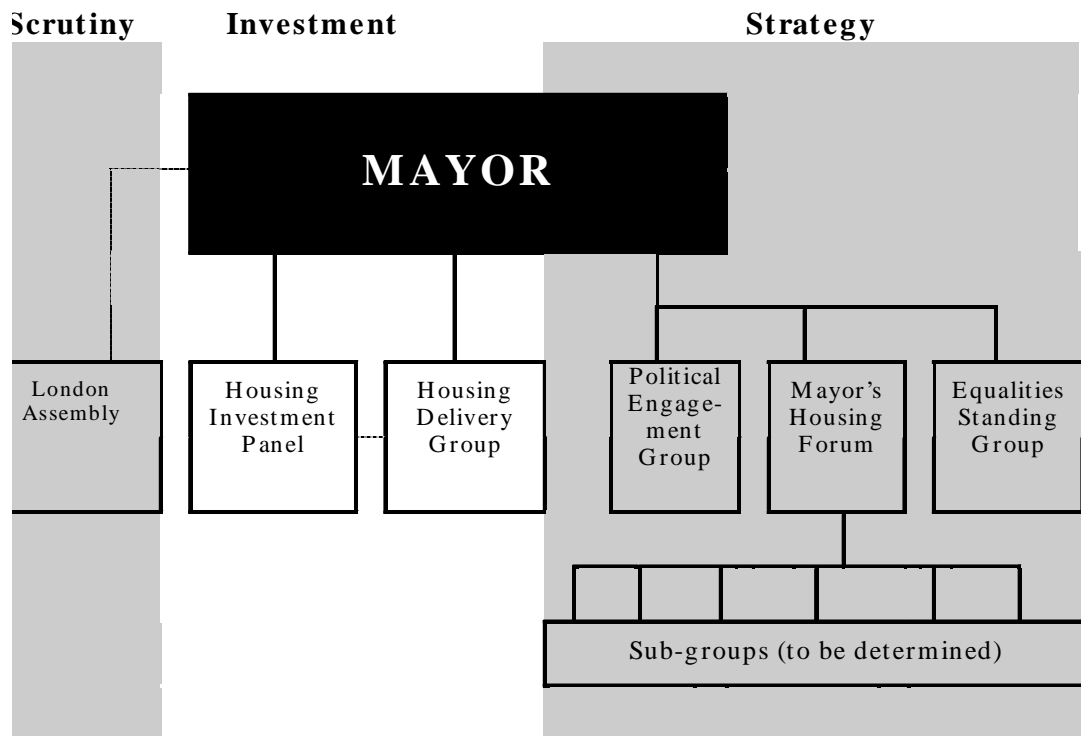
- 1.9 For the purposes of this report the following definitions are used:²
- **Consultation:** providing effective ways for citizens, service users and stakeholders to understand and influence decisions and policies that affect them. Examples include consultation on the Mayoral strategies;
 - **Public engagement:** informing and communicating with Londoners, building awareness of strategic London issues and creating opportunities for dialogue and involvement in decisions and solutions;
 - **Londoners:** people that live, work, study, or run businesses in London, visitors to London, commuters into London, and organisations located in the capital;
 - **Stakeholders and stakeholder engagement:** dialogue with organisations, networks and alliances of Londoners to inform policy and strategy development.
- 1.10 The terms of reference of the CET are attached at appendix 1.
- 1.11 Deliberations of the CET led to the commissioning of research that would enable the final summary report to consider how effectively current structures feed information to London's communities, including harder to engage groups who often face additional barriers to participation. A full list of the CET commissioned research in addition to other sources is at Appendix 2. This report is informed by all these sources. It is also informed by the many sessions held by the CET to receive oral and written evidence from interested groups.
- 1.12 The commissioned research concentrated, in particular, on tenant and resident consultation and engagement structures in local authorities, housing associations, and the private rented sector. The Task Force also examined processes and requirements to engage harder to reach groups, including London's homeless people and travelling populations.
- 1.13 Throughout the process, the equalities implications of engagement mechanisms were taken into account. Work was undertaken to ensure that any future mechanisms would be accessible to London's diverse communities.

² Consulting London: a framework for the core GLA, LDA, LFEPA, MPA and TfL, September 2003

The Mayor's engagement proposals

- 1.14 In order to inform the shape and nature of future London-wide engagement structures, the GLA, jointly with London Councils, also commissioned Ipsos MORI, as part of a separate exercise, to undertake a consultation exercise with the key housing and homelessness stakeholders in London about the new structures that will advise and support the Mayor following the transfer of housing powers. The consultation took place earlier this year and a report was presented to the Mayor's Housing Forum in October 2006.
- 1.15 The overall structure is set out in Figure 1.
- 1.16 The CET has completed its work. A proposal to create a time-limited **CE sub-group (CESG)** to take forward the actions of the CET will be discussed at the next MHF meeting in January. If the proposal is accepted by the MHF the CESG will be set up in January, and its role will be reviewed again in July 2007.

Figure 1: GLA Structures for consultation, engagement and delivery



2 Findings from the research

- 2.1 This section draws on the several strands of research listed at Appendix 2 and attempts summarise the key findings. This section explores formal and informal engagement structures in the local authority sector, housing association sector, the private rented sector and in relation to hard to reach groups. The CET also mapped over 90 different types of structures for tenant and resident engagement used by the London boroughs at the estate, neighbourhood and borough level as well as specialist forums to engage with vulnerable members of the community. In addition, the CET gathered the views of Londoners' on regional housing issues. These are not reported here, however, but they are detailed in the contributing reports, all of which are available separately from London Councils.

Tenant engagement in the boroughs – formal structures

- 2.2 Research for the CET by Solon Community Network found that local authority structures are quite sophisticated and properly resourced. All the boroughs included in the research have highly developed well-resourced formal tenant participation structures. These facilitate the involvement of a core group of tenants, and offer the potential for tenants to be involved in decision-making locally and borough-wide; operationally and strategically.
- 2.3 Alongside the formal structures, a range of more 'consumerist' approaches are being developed to canvas the views of individual tenants. For example, tenants are increasingly invited to attend performance monitoring and service review panels and express their individual preferences and views on issues such as the choice of contractors or materials. There is also a range of mechanisms in place to seek the views of tenants from groups, traditionally hard to engage. Tenants and officers place considerable importance on informal methods of consultation.
- 2.4 Tenants who attended a focus group facilitated by Solon Community Network suggested that a tenants' sounding board could be introduced to engagement with residents about regional housing issues.
- 2.5 Communication up and down the formal tenant engagement structures – between officers and tenants - seems to work well, and tenants are given opportunities to network and share ideas and concerns.
- 2.6 Extensive training programmes are on offer to tenants. Many tenant representatives are well informed and articulate about housing issues.
- 2.7 There are 500 housing associations operating in London. This reflects the diversity of the sector which embraces the large, developing organisations providing and managing a broad spectrum of housing (for rent and ownership) over a wide geographical area; as well as a range of different associations providing for households with special needs and smaller associations, including BME associations, cooperatives, almshouses and other bodies with charitable origins who own and manage homes in fairly specific local areas.
- 2.8 There are few opportunities for tenants of registered social landlords or private sector landlords to participate in local authority structures, although

there are some cross-tenure models in evidence. For example, the LB of Brent has a sophisticated process which is detailed as a case study at Appendix 3. Barking and Dagenham and Islington provide two further examples of boroughs that have adopted this approach.

- 2.9 There are external constraints upon local authorities, however, which mean that tenants' views cannot always be taken into account: officers in the boroughs are not always clear with tenants about the extent to which they can influence decisions, which is no doubt responsible for some of the negative feedback found during the research.
- 2.10 Tenants said they do not always get feedback following a consultation exercise. The boroughs may well be taking tenants' views into account more than it appears to tenants: officers need more effective systems for informing tenants of the results of consultation exercises and where their views have had an influence.

Borough tenant engagement in the London regional agenda

- 2.11 There is very little understanding or knowledge about the London regional housing agenda or decision-making structures amongst officers or tenants in the boroughs, and virtually no debate about these issues in the boroughs.
- 2.12 The sub-regional and regional housing structure is yet to develop effective mechanisms to ensure that information filters down to officers in the London boroughs. There has been no requirement, to date, for the boroughs to consult their tenants on regional housing issues.
- 2.13 Tenants in the boroughs are, however, enthusiastic about being involved in the regional and sub-regional agenda, and would welcome the chance to give their views on regional housing issues, provided there is a genuine opportunity for them to influence the debate. This is important as how funding is allocated across London will affect all London residents.
- 2.14 The sub-regions and their sub-groups could potentially be used as a way to involve residents in the sub-regional and regional agenda.

The London Tenants Federation (LTF)

- 2.15 The only pan-London formal structure for tenants and residents, the London Tenants' Federation, is also currently the main source of information on regional issues for local authority tenants and residents. The London Tenants Federation (LTF) is an umbrella organisation bringing together borough-wide council tenant federations and organisations across London. It is a not a party political organisation and is built on the basis of consensus.
- 2.16 The LTF operates in a democratic and accountable fashion, built on formal local authority tenant structures. Its members have a substantial amount of knowledge and experience from the local, neighbourhood and borough level, through to the regional level. They are elected through borough wide tenants' federations and organisations. Members have a remit to feed back through their organisations and to bring to the LTF table issues relating to debates held within their organisations.
- 2.17 The organisation meets on a six weekly basis and invites guest speakers to every other meeting. These have included officers and politicians from London Councils, GLA, Thames Water, Shelter, government officers and others.

Informal structures in the boroughs

2.18 Boroughs have an extensive and well embedded range of informal mechanisms to engage residents at the local authority level. Almost without exception, tenants and officers agreed that informal structures for tenant and resident engagement are critical to its success. In every borough included in the research, a number of arrangements have been introduced to engage with tenants outside the formal tenant participation structures: in some boroughs, these are extensive. The arrangements include:

- Focus groups
- Surveys – both borough wide and on specific issues
- Tear-off reply slips in newsletters
- Fun days
- Working groups
- Residents' Panels
- Social events (sometimes including presentations to tenants)
- Feed-back forms following events/training
- Tenants on the editorial boards of newsletters

2.19 In most boroughs, there is, in addition, a range of measures aimed at involving tenants from traditionally hard to engage groups. They include:

- BME surgeries
- Asian women's groups
- Youth forums or conferences
- Events held in sheltered accommodation

Tenant engagement in housing associations – formal structures

2.20 Research for the CET by Solon Community Network notes that there are many hundreds of housing associations operating in London, compared with just 33 London boroughs. Whereas, many of the boroughs operate borough-wide forums for consulting tenants, housing associations more commonly operate association-wide forums. Where these have been established, they may bear no relation to geographical location.

2.21 Although there are diverse mechanisms for resident engagement in housing associations, from resident members of the main board of a housing association to estate based residents associations, residents' associations play a smaller role in the tenant engagement structures of most housing associations, particularly those studied for this research.

2.22 Structures tend to be less formal than borough counterparts and, importantly, there is no pan-London equivalent to the LTF.

2.23 The report of the recent independent Tenant Involvement Commission³, established by the National Housing Federation reported that tenants would like to be better represented on housing association boards. It also advised the sector to develop tenants' scrutiny committees which would be able to further hold boards to account. It also recommended that the 'right to manage' could be extended to the housing association sector. The National Housing Federation and its members were considering their responses at the time of writing.

³ What tenants want: Report of the Tenant Involvement Commission (2006)

Tenant engagement in housing associations – informal structures

2.24 Housing associations do use informal mechanisms to consult tenants, alongside their more formal arrangements. They rely upon these mechanisms for involvement to a greater extent than the local authorities. These mechanisms include:

- Customer panels
- Focus groups
- Surveys – both housing association-wide and on specific issues
- Working groups
- Coffee mornings
- Websites
- Events/open days
- Residents on editorial boards of newsletters

Housing association tenant engagement in the London regional agenda

2.25 Solon's research found that there is currently limited understanding or awareness of the regional housing agenda amongst housing association tenants and residents. Furthermore, officers have a limited understanding of regional and sub-regional housing issues and decision-making structures too. There was a similar problem within the boroughs although the regional agenda was better understood. This is not a criticism however as the regional agenda is relatively new and therefore more training will be required in the future.

2.26 Whilst there is little awareness of the regional agenda amongst tenants at the moment, there is considerable enthusiasm amongst those interviewed to be involved in debate about London regional housing issues in the future. One group of tenants added the caveat that they would be interested, provided regional decision-makers took notice of their views. Tenants also stressed that they would want feedback following consultation on regional housing issues.

Methods of Engagement in the Regional Agenda

2.27 Housing association tenants suggested a variety of ways in which information might be made available to them on regional housing issues:

- Residents of the special needs housing association suggested local meetings, including evening focus groups. (Officers of this housing association also said that local meetings would be the best consultation method for tenants with special needs.) They also suggested newsletters, short briefing notes, a DVD and the use of websites and email. They said they would need clarity on what the consultation activity was for, and plain English, and that incentives should be offered to encourage people to participate, such as refreshments or vouchers.
- Other tenants supported the idea of a London-wide conference. One group thought this should be bi-annual, given the likely number of issues to be covered. They also recommended the use of a website. Another group of tenants said they thought a launch event would be important.
- Housing association tenants interviewed said they would be happy to be consulted jointly with local authority tenants on regional housing issues: indeed, they said they thought this was the logical approach. In some

instances over half the social properties in boroughs are managed by housing associations. It therefore seems sensible to work towards joint residents' forums whereby housing association residents attend local authority borough wide forums as is currently the case in Brent and Newham. Of course, this would require resourcing issues to be overcome such as securing contributions towards running of such services, which are currently funded by council tenants from the housing revenue account.

Box 2.1 A model approach: The Hammersmith and Fulham Residents' Forum

A model approach to engaging housing associations tenants and residents is the Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Forum (H&FBF). This evolved from the Hammersmith and Fulham Tenants' and Residents Association (HAFTRA): an association of local authority tenants that employed a housing association worker to encourage the involvement of housing association tenants.

H&FBF membership is open to housing association tenants from all housing associations operating in the Borough, and currently includes approximately 50 tenants from seven housing associations.

The HAFTRA housing association worker left about a year ago, and the post has since been vacant. The Forum is now considering whether or not it wishes to continue under the umbrella of HAFTRA, or to employ its own worker and operate independently. In the meantime, an officer from Shepherd's Bush Housing Association is servicing the Forum.

The purpose of the Forum is to bring together housing association tenants in order to share ideas and resources, and to act as a voice for housing association tenants.

Tenants on the Forum are keen to see more borough-wide forums for housing association tenants, replicating the structure of their group, and that these groups should then hold pan-London meetings.

Engaging tenants and residents in the private rented sector

2.28 National and local housing surveys show that physical conditions in the private rented sector are worse than in other forms of housing. The private rented sector is home to a larger number of BME tenants than other housing tenures. This sector may be the only option for new immigrants, including refugees and asylum seekers.

2.29 The transfer of housing powers to the Mayor presents an opportunity to ensure that all Londoners have the opportunity to be effectively informed, engaged and consulted on the regional housing agenda. The Mayor already has a well-developed range of consultation and engagement mechanisms and it is important to utilise these fully.

2.30 Other organisations' structures and mechanisms could also be fully utilised, particularly where they enable consultation with, and engagement of, groups of Londoners who cannot be reached in other ways. Examples specific to

tenants in the private rented sector include the National Union of Students and homeless support organisations. New mechanisms should be developed only if they add value, or do something different to, and better than, that which exists already.

2.31 Priority groups for engagement within the private rented sector include:

- Families seeking social housing that have been redirected to the private rented sector;
- Students;
- Young, single people on low incomes that are less likely to be aware of their rights;
- BME groups.

2.32 The CET met with Environmental Health Officers who often have cause to visit homes in the private rented sector. This meeting was to enable the CET to assess further the need for engagement in this sector and potential routes for it.

2.33 Brent Private Tenants Rights Group (BPTRG) works in the borough organising events, street stalls, newsletters, and by liaising with advice and legal agencies to provide a means of supporting private tenants. They have advised the CET that a separate stream is required for the engagement of the private rented sector.

2.34 BPTRG intends to run a pilot sub-regional network (see Box 2.2) and in due course this could be extended to a pan-regional engagement forum.

Box 2.2 Examples of engagement with the private rented sector

- LB Redbridge carry out a regular survey of approximately 2700 vulnerable households.
- LB Newham's regeneration programme has a tour for private tenants that include seminars on tenants' priorities.
- LB Brent holds quarterly forums of about 30-40 private tenants, set up by the Private Housing Service Team.
- West London Licensing sub-group has forums for private rented sector tenants.
- There has been positive engagement with landlords through accreditation schemes.

Box 2.3 A potential model - West London Private Tenants Network

Brent Private Tenants' Rights Group (BPTRG) works to meet the needs of people living in privately rented accommodation in Brent. It achieves this through a variety of methods including newsletters and street stalls, close working with the local network of advice and legal agencies. It is now hoping to develop a pilot project to create a sub-regional forum – the West London Private Tenants Network. BTRPG believes that it could be possible to replicate this model in due course and indeed, to create a pan-London forum for residents of this sector.

The West London Network would:

- Circulate information that private tenants need to know about landlord and tenant housing rights and obligations using a variety of communication methods, including working through partner agencies;
- Encourage feedback from tenants about their individual concerns;
- Ensure that tenants with housing problems receive timely and accurate advice by appropriate referral;
- Obtain tenants' views on national, regional, sub-regional and local proposals for changes in laws, policies and service delivery, that directly affect private tenants;
- Make responses to such proposals on behalf of the network;
- Assist tenants in formulating their own proposals for change;
- Work with tenants to campaign for the changes they wish to see and ensure that the voice of private tenants is heard at every level of decision-making.

Key outcomes

The following are examples of the outcomes that the Network hopes to achieve.

- Vulnerable tenants will feel less isolated;
- Tenants, including those from a variety of BME communities and faith groups, will voice concerns collectively and act together to call for improvements in their living conditions;
- Local councils and others will consult private tenants about their housing strategies;
- Private tenants will feel more involved and more will engage in the democratic process;
- Advice agencies and local solicitors will become more aware of policy issues affecting private tenants.

Hard to reach groups

2.35 The CET undertook research into the means of engaging hard to reach groups. This included groups that would find engagement less easy owing to their housing circumstances including homeless households and travellers, and those whose accessibility might be limited by other factors such as language barriers or other special needs. People from BME communities may also be harder to reach.

2.36 In summary, the CET was advised that:

- Future consultation must include a greater number of events and a broader range of consultation methodology, in order to reflect the scale and range of homeless households in London;
- Consultation should exploit the considerable range of expertise and existing practice within the homelessness sector;
- Where possible consultation should be user led, with preparation and funding mindful of this need;

- Clear mechanisms need to be established to ensure the impacts of consultation are fed back to consultees.
- 2.37 Previous consultation events held for the development of the current London Housing Strategy offer a successful model, but it was recognised that events are not appropriate to all as they can be too challenging for some clients. As such, a range of consultation and engagement methodology was identified.
- 2.38 These included:
- Consultation events/speak outs
 - Focus groups
 - Existing groups – meaningful occupation etc
 - Face-to-face interview
 - Facilitated conversation
 - Telephone interview
 - Postal questionnaire
 - News media
 - On-line opportunities

Consultation and engagement in general and particularly with hard to reach groups should:

- Give sufficient time for promotion, preparation of materials and organisation;
- Be based on existing best practice models developed by homelessness services such as the Groundswell ‘Speak Out Recipe Book’;
- Be guided and co-ordinated to ensure consistency in the issues that are consulted on;
- Where possible, be user led with training and support given focus on the breadth of the housing issues and not narrowed to homelessness policy.

There is considerable interest and willingness among voluntary sector homelessness services to be involved in this consultation work. Organisations such as Homeless Link, Shelter, Crisis and a range of hostel providers have indicated their desire to be involved in this process.

Consulting with homeless households

- 2.39 The Mayor will use his existing well-developed range of mechanisms for consultation and engagement as part of development of the Mayor’s Housing Strategy. The existing consultation mechanisms are both statutory and non-statutory. However, it is recognised that there is a need for more targeted mechanisms to engage with homeless Londoners, in both priority and non-priority need, on regional housing policy and strategy.
- 2.40 Furthermore, there are some actions that will form part of the GLA’s internal consultation, communications and publicity plan for the development of the Mayor’s Housing Strategy. These will of course, have to go through GLA’s own internal approval processes, and might not necessarily link to the work of the Mayor’s Housing Forum.
- 2.41 It is proposed that the GLA will work with Homeless Link (the representative organisation for voluntary sector homelessness services) to plan and co-

ordinate a range of consultation events among their members. This would include hostel users; current and former rough sleepers, homeless day centre users, and client groups receiving specialist services for issues such as substance abuse or mental ill health.

- 2.42 The GLA are also hoping to work with providers to set up focus groups, or use existing meaningful occupation groups, to extend the reach of consultation to those who may not wish to attend a larger event.
- 2.43 The London Homeless Families Network has eleven member organisations spread across London. The GLA intends to work with the HFN to identify and plan a number of consultation events among its members. These groups are predominately attended by families placed in local authority temporary accommodation.
- 2.44 The GLA has identified one housing association that has a representative group for its tenants housed in leased temporary accommodation. The association has agreed that it would be prepared to use one of the group's meetings for a consultation focus group.

News Media/on-line consultation

- 2.45 'The Pavement' is a magazine for homeless people. Three thousand copies are distributed monthly to homeless shelters, day centres and hostels. 'The Pavement' has offered to run features on housing issues and the Mayor's Housing Strategy, followed up by an on-line survey and a 'vox-pops' section for its readers' comments.

Community outreach and Drop-ins

- 2.46 Shelter have suggested conducting consultation through their London based BME advice giving projects which operate through outreach advice to community groups or drop-in services. This would provide valuable access to hard to reach groups who may not be involved in existing formal structures or based in hostels.
- 2.47 Some groups, such as 'hidden homeless' individuals or households, are hard to reach and consult with. Broader consultation activity may capture some responses from these groups, but they will not necessarily be identifiable. Wider consultation activities may reach homeless households and groups that are not directly involved in the proposed consultation outlined above. Such approaches include:
- Publishing a feature article in 'The Londoner' on housing issues and the Mayor's Housing Strategy that will inform Londoners on how to comment on the strategy if they want to. For example, the www.london.gov.uk website has a section that called 'Consulting London'. Londoners can register to take part in future consultations, get feedback on past consultations, and information on research carried out to contribute to Mayoral policy and decision making.
 - 'People's Question Time' offers Londoners the chance to question the Mayor and the London Assembly about their plans, priorities and policies for London. These meetings are held twice a year, in the evening, each time in a different area of London. Housing and the Mayor's Housing Strategy could be raised as an issue for discussion.

- The 'Black Londoners Forum' is a proactive organisation, which seeks to advance the economic, cultural and social well being of black and minority ethnic Londoners. The 'Black Londoners Forum' is the recognised interface between the Greater London Authority (GLA) and London's black communities. The Forum brings together organisations and individuals from many sectors, in order to facilitate effective consultation on Mayoral strategy and directly influence the way that the capital is run.
- 'London Citizens' is a diverse alliance of active citizens and community leaders organising for change. Members include faith groups, schools, student organisations, union branches and residents groups. This organisation has expressed an interest in housing issues, in particular community land trusts and affordable housing.

3 A summary of the issues

- 3.1 The issues relating to community engagement in regional policy that have been identified are summarised below.
- 3.2 There are significant gaps in formal structures for housing association and private tenants and residents on a pan-London basis. Local authority residents are better served both by formal structures and the London Tenants' Federation (LTF), which, amongst other things, is represented on the Mayor's Housing Form (MHF).
- 3.3 Surveys and research commissioned by the CET, have found a lack of knowledge of the regional agenda by most tenants and resident groups and some officers of the various landlords - but a willingness to know more and to engage with this agenda is evident.
- 3.4 There are currently no sub-regional structures for tenant and resident engagement.
- 3.5 There is significant variation in the spread of tenant and resident engagement structures across London in all tenures. There is diversity of models in local authority and in particular amongst housing associations.
- 3.6 Local authority tenants and residents associations are (with some exceptions) better developed and more often of a representative nature, than those of housing associations.
- 3.7 Housing associations tend to rely more on consumer panels and the use of resident Board members who may, or may not, be elected by the body of residents.
- 3.8 There is no single model for tenant and resident engagement on a pan-London basis that is preferred, although there are several examples of good practice that can be built on, for example in Newham, Brent and Hounslow and using the LTF as a potential model.
- 3.9 All reports offer a similar general conclusion: that it is preferable to build on existing structures and to roll out models that work rather than introduce a completely new tier of engagement although there could be an enhanced role for the sub-regions.
- 3.10 The consultation exercises on 'Capital Homes' with homeless people worked very well and could be extended, especially to meet the needs of hard to reach groups.
- 3.11 Useful networks already exist to support hard to reach groups that are willing to assist in engagement structures and which can be built upon.
- 3.12 Feedback on consultation that has taken place, both formal and informal, is not always sufficient. It is viewed, by those surveyed as critical to the process of effective engagement. Those groups that have been consulted are keen to understand the outcome and impact of the views they have expressed and, indeed, the time they have committed to contributing to the process.
- 3.13 Incentives to engage, such as vouchers and crèches are useful.
- 3.14 Formal and informal structures and methods are required to ensure that the body of tenants and residents who are not formally represented can be

engaged. These are also necessary to ensure that hard to reach groups, especially homeless people and some people from BME communities, can also engage with the regional agenda.

4 The way ahead and recommendations

- 4.1 The CET has now completed its work. The CET has reviewed the evidence and has striven to achieve two things. Firstly, to set out an approach that will enable tenants and residents across London to engage immediately, or in the shorter term, with the current review of the Mayor's Housing Strategy. It recognises however, that there is a groundswell of support amongst Londoners for more formal engagement and feedback processes. To this end it has also developed a longer-term vision of how engagement structures could look, following a period of development. The principles upon which this structure has been developed and which inform the CET's recommendations to the Mayor's Housing Forum (MHF) are detailed below.

The vision: overview and principles

- 4.2 The organic development of existing structures and approaches is preferred to a revolutionary new approach. These will be developed into more comprehensive, formal structures over time. Future development will concentrate on overcoming the gaps in regional engagement structures. Critically, a subtlety of approach is required. New structures and processes must be evolved with the tenants and residents and not imposed - if they are to be welcomed and stand the test of time.
- 4.3 Both formal and informal processes of engagement are of value and form an equal basis for the model.
- 4.4 There should be clear differentiation in the levels of engagement, for example, from information giving to involvement and active participation.
- 4.5 Any structure should take a pyramid form. It must work from the grass roots upwards, striving towards cross tenure structures, operating in boroughs and neighbourhoods, with the local authorities championing local communities. However, housing association structures, as noted below, are not always representative and accountable to the body of residents. Particular approaches are required to accommodate this issue and the diversity of housing associations.
- 4.6 There is scope for a developing role for the sub-regions in disseminating regional strategy and feedback from consultations. In addition, the sub-regions could build on their work in private sector renewal, possibly developing sub-regional forums for private sector tenants.
- 4.7 The MHF should disseminate information through the structure in a clear, relevant and accessible form via the sub-regions, London Councils and the London Housing Federation (LHF). The 5 sub-regions will act as an upward filter collecting the views of their 5-6 boroughs and then disseminating these to the MHF. Feedback from the MHF would also be delivered via the sub-

regions and the LHF. The London Councils and LHF will work together to assist in this process.

- 4.8 A proposal to create a time-limited **Community Engagement sub-group (CESG)** to take forward the actions of the CET will be discussed at the next MHF meeting in January. If the proposal is accepted by the MHF the CESG will be set up in January, and its role will be reviewed again in July 2007.
- 4.9 Representation on the CESG should include LTF and initially, the Brent Private Tenants' Rights Group (BPTRG) would be represented on it too, as a proxy for the private rented sector, as they are, on the Mayor's Forum itself. In due course, BPTRG might be replaced, if a pan-London forum is developed. Officers would also be represented, as would housing associations.
- 4.10 An option for discussion is that, temporarily, the Chair of the Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Forum (H&FBF) could serve, if willing, on the MHF sub-group, mentioned above, or another representative suggested by the LHF, until housing association structures are further developed.
- 4.11 A draft set of terms of reference for such a sub-group is given at appendix 4, for consideration by the Mayor's Housing Forum, which should endorse this sub-group, its terms of reference and membership.
- 4.12 One of the functions of the CESG of the MHF could be to take forward, monitor and review the implementation of the short-term vision and recommended actions contained in this report (see Section 5). The CESG should set out clear specific performance indicators and a performance management framework, to take forward the recommendations of the Taskforce and drive the agenda forward to for the longer term. Key stakeholders should also report to this sub-group against progress.

Moving to cross-tenure structures for local authorities and housing associations

- 4.13 The vision requires the development of borough-wide local authority and housing association forums or similar structures. The next stage would be for discussions to take place between borough-wide local authority and housing association tenant forums about the development of appropriate structures to facilitate cross tenure work.

Housing associations

- 4.14 Many housing associations structures are not constituted on borough lines, or on a basis whereby estate based TRAs form the foundation for the structures. They may, as noted earlier, involve a regional structure or even be part of a national structure. Engagement might be through non-elected board members. Consumerist approaches are often favoured. The CET recognises this diversity of approach. The model suggested (see Figure 2) allows for such approaches. For example, groups of housing association residents may attend either borough forums, borough-wide cross tenure forums, or a sub-regional or even a pan-regional forum, once these are developed, and as appropriate.

- 4.15 An important gap in structures is the lack of a pan-London equivalent of the London Tenants' Federation for housing association tenants. Housing associations are therefore also asked to consider working with the LHF and the boroughs, to establish a federation of housing association tenants at borough level where possible. This would be similar to the model operated in Hammersmith and Fulham.
- 4.16 The London Housing Federation has committed to two immediate undertakings. Firstly, it will, subject to funding being available for the region, organise an early conference for tenants and residents of housing associations to consider future engagement and aspects of the regional agenda. Secondly, it will approach members and request that they consider contributing to funding to enable a Tenant Development Officer (TDO) to be appointed, to take forward the regional engagement agenda for the sector.

The private rented sector

- 4.17 The submission to the CET emphasised the need for a separate structure for the private rented sector. The London Councils will work with the GLA and the Boroughs to enable TDOs to strengthen borough based structures for this sector. If the pilot of the West London pilot progresses then it could be replicated. The Brent Private Tenants Rights Group believes that this could eventually develop into a pan- London forum, dispensing with the need to create sub-regional structures.
- 4.18 The sub-regions could also employ TDOs to assist sub-regional co-ordinators in addressing the engagement of the private sector tenants.

Hard to reach groups

- 4.19 As set out in some detail in section 2, engagement with these groups requires a set of informal structures and mechanisms. All stakeholder bodies will contribute to the development of the informal structures. There are financial implications arising from this work and, of course, from other aspects of these proposals as noted below.

Next steps

- 4.20 Further work is required on the longer-term financial implications of these proposals providing clear information about current expenditure on tenant engagement and making recommendations for the future funding and support of regional tenant structures and to review the delivery of the community engagement action plan. It is suggested that this be taken forward by the CESG, the progress of which will be reviewed in July 2007.

5 Table of detailed recommendations and actions

A table of detailed recommendations and actions follows, which flows from the recommendations given in the executive summary at the front of this report.

Column 3 lists the timescales:

- Immediate or short term = S
- Medium to long term, 12 months plus = L

Those bodies highlighted in bold are suggested as the lead body. Each element is detailed separately in order that this table can be developed into a full action plan in due course should the MHF require it.

The MHF will be responsible for over-seeing the delivery of actions, but the onus for actual delivery must be on external organisations.

Furthermore, there are some actions that will form part of the GLA's internal consultation, communications and publicity plan for the development of the Mayor's Housing Strategy. These will of course, have to go through GLA's own internal approval processes, and might not necessarily link to the work of the Mayor's Housing Forum.

A table of detailed recommendations and actions – tenant and resident engagement with regional strategy			
ALL TENURES			
	Recommendation	Timescale	Action by
1.	The MHF should enable longer-term strategies and further development by creating a time limited Community Engagement sub-group (CESG) of the MHF. The London Tenants Federation, BPTRG and a housing association tenant representative would be represented on the CESG. In the short term, the sub-group should develop a work programme that maximises opportunities to influence the development of the Mayor’s Housing Strategy using the recommendations of the Taskforce as a basis for doing this.	S	MHF/ CESG
2.	The GLA will ensure that its consultation strategy for the Mayor’s Housing Strategy raises awareness and increases knowledge of London regional housing issues, using the Mayor’s existing well-developed range of mechanisms for consultation and other mechanisms outlined in the report. For example, London Councils, the sub-regions and LHF networks and other existing networks, such as the London Tenants Federation as well as using Mayoral communication resources such as the Londoner newspaper.	S	GLA
2.1	A cross tenure tenants’ and residents’ conference on regional housing issues should be held.	S	LC Sub-regions, LHF BPTRG, LTF
2.2	The GLA will explore the feasibility of using its existing consultation and engagement mechanisms such as The Londoner, monthly surveys and the State of London Debate to consult on regional housing issues	S	GLA
2.3	In the longer term, stakeholders of the MHF will be encouraged to promote the provision of on-going information and consultation with tenants. This could include regular newsletters and briefing papers, an internet chat-room, an annual or bi-annual tenants’ conference, establishing a London regional tenants sounding board and an annual meeting for tenant chairs of borough-wide groups. The merits and practicalities of these methods should be considered by the CESG.	L	LC,LHF,HC,HAs LAs BPTRG, LTF

2.4	The CESG should investigate the resources available for regional resident consultation and proposals to build on the recommendations above to achieve greater regional resident involvement over time.	L	CESG LC,LHF,HC,HAs LAs LTF
2.5	The CESG should consider the quality of communications on regional issues, developing accessible information to households from all tenures, working alongside the LTF and other groups that will be represented on such a group.	L	CESG LC,LHF,HC,HAs LAs LTF
2.6	Further work is required on the longer-term financial implications of these proposals providing clear information about current expenditure on tenant engagement and making recommendations for the future funding and support of regional tenant structures and to review the delivery of the community engagement action plan	S	CESG, LC

	Recommendation	Timescale	Action by
3.	Engagement structures should take a pyramid form building from the grass roots at borough level upwards with boroughs championing local engagement across the tenures.	L	LAs HAs LTF HC LC
3.1	Consideration should be given by all organisations to the training resources required by officers, tenant and resident groups to take this agenda forward.	L	GLA HC LAs HAS LC
3.2	Local authority councillors are able to interface with residents. Consideration should be given to how this 'resource' could be developed to collect feedback on the regional housing strategy	L	LC LAs
3.3	Existing tenants and resident associations and housing association groups should consider the draft housing strategy at a future meeting although the regional strategy must be presented in a way that is relevant and accessible to these groups, given their already busy agendas. GLA officers should be available to attend if invited.	S	LAs GLA, LTF,LC

	Recommendation	Timescale	Action
4	The CESG of the Mayor's Housing Forum should investigate the resource requirements to adequately facilitate community engagement and explore the need to build capacity across all sectors.	S	CESG LHF, LTF, LC, HC, LAs

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RESIDENTS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS (TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS)

	Recommendation	Timescale	Action by
5.	Housing associations should work alongside the boroughs to create borough-wide cross tenure TRAs which will include residents (tenants and leaseholders) of housing associations in accordance with existing models, this will include consumerist models such as panels and conferences. It is acknowledged that existing LA borough-wide forums have often been developed through lengthy consultation with tenants and are detailed in tenant compacts. Approaches adopted will therefore be diverse and developed in consultation with all tenants, including federations of LA and housing association tenants	L	LAs HAs LC HC LHF LTF
5.1	Local Authority Housing Association Liaison Groups could be used to form a starting point for officer led discussion of the regional strategy which could flow down into the organisations and TRAs.	S	LAs, HAs
5.2	Housing associations should consider committing to working with the LHF and the boroughs, to establish a federation of housing association tenants at borough level. This would be similar to the model operated in Hammersmith and Fulham.	L	HAs LAs LHF
5.3	The development of discussion of regional housing issues through existing LA and housing association tenants and residents groups at borough level is needed.	S	LAs HAs
5.4	Housing association representatives should be invited, where possible, to existing Borough residents groups.	S	LAs HAs, LTF

	Recommendation	Timescale	Action by
6.	Housing associations should consider making contributions to meeting the cost of a tenant development officer (TDO) to take this work forward at a borough level.	S	HAs
6.1	The potential of some of the large housing associations to take a lead and offer their tenant representative bodies as a sort of 'umbrella' organisation on regional housing issues for other housing associations' residents, should be explored.	L	HAs, LHF
		S	HAs

6.2	Meetings should be established for existing HA TRAs to meet with local neighbourhood organisations to consider regional housing strategy.		
6.3	GLA officers should be available to attend HA TRAs as a means of direct consultation, if invited.	S	HAs GLA
6.4	The London Housing Federation have committed to taking the recommendation to the G15, the regional committee and the G 320 for their consideration.	S	HAs LHF
6.5	The LHF is to arrange a conference for tenants and residents of housing associations on regional strategy and engagement (subject to funding being available).	S	LHF

	Recommendation	Timescale	Lead body
7	Feedback to the Mayor's Housing Forum will required from those leading consultations with the different tenure groups and also back to those tenants and residents consulted from the consulting organisations This should be regular and clear. Local authorities, housing associations and others should report to the sub-regions by borough. The sub-region should then assemble the outcomes and report to the MHF. The sub-regions should then feedback outcomes with assistance from the London Councils and the LHF to those involved for dissemination to those groups consulted.	S	Sub-regions LAs HAs
7.1	The sub-regions should develop mechanisms for collecting the outcomes of consultations for feeding up to the GLA from the boroughs.	S	Sub regions LAs, HAs GLA
7.2	The sub-regions should develop clear mechanisms for feeding back the outcomes of consultation to those consulted via the boroughs.	S	Sub-regions HAs LAs
7.3	The sub-regions should consider inviting the London Tenants Federation and other tenants' groups to meetings which are to consider the sub-region's responses to the regional housing strategy.	S	Sub Regions LTF

PRIVATE SECTOR TENANTS AND RESIDENTS

	Recommendation	Timescale	Lead body
8.	A separate stream for engagement by private sector residents is required. Engagement of the private	L	Sub-regions LAs

	sector could become the responsibility of sub-regional TDOs (perhaps supervised by sub-regional coordinators), which would build on the sub-regions' work on private sector renewal. The work of Brent Private Tenant Rights Group and the West London Private Tenants Network and a possible pan-London forum offers a potential model dependent upon the review of the pilot.		
8.1	The sub-regions should investigate whether a private tenants' and residents' group is required. The West London Private Tenants & Residents Forum could serve as a potential model.	S	Sub-regions, LA

	Recommendation	Timescale	Lead body
9.	TDOs and sub-regional co-ordinators should build upon the embryonic network of solicitors and advice agencies at borough level to develop a partnership that would enable consultation to take place across the private rented sector.	L	Sub-regions LAs
9.1	Private tenant groups and federations could create partnerships with advice agencies and others, as a means of distributing leaflets and posters in surgeries and offices to reach private tenants	L	Sub-regions private tenant groups LAS

HARD TO REACH GROUPS

	Recommendation	Timescale	Lead Body
10	The strategy for consulting with hard to reach groups should be developed in consultation with the Equalities Standing Group. This could build on existing borough structures which enable consultation with people with a range of diverse needs.	S	GLA, LAs , ESG
10.1	Equality impact assessments are required to assess how equality groups are engaged in regional housing strategy.	S	GLA, ESG

	Recommendation	Timescale	Lead body
11.	A range of informal approaches should be developed to engage the wider body of residents and especially	L	GLA LAs

	hard to reach groups including homeless people and travellers in the development of the London Housing Strategy.		
11.1	The London Housing Federation's temporary accommodation benchmarking group should consider which housing associations could offer opportunities for consultation focus groups with residents, where this is in their contracts. Where this is not stated then the lead would rest with the local authorities.	S	HAs LAs LHF
11.2	Consultation should take place through appropriate existing disability forums	S	GLA LAs
11.3	The GLA should work with London's homeless service providers, including Homeless Link, many of which have established mechanisms for user consultation and can offer considerable experience in effective engagement upon which to build.	S	GLA LAs Voluntary organisations and advice agencies
11.4	The GLA should work with the London Homeless Families Network (LHFN) to identify and plan a number of consultation events among its members.	S	GLA LHFN
11.5	The GLA should work with 'The Pavement' which has offered to run features on housing issues and the Mayor's Housing Strategy followed up by an on-line survey and a 'vox-pops' section for its readers' comments.	S	GLA The Pavement
11.6	The GLA could also seek to use similar opportunities provided by in-house publications of some of the hostel and service providers in London	S	Homeless Link
11.7	The GLA with the MHF should work with Shelter conducting consultation through their London based, BME advice giving projects, which operate through outreach advice to community groups	S	GLA Shelter
11.8	As part of its consultation and communications plan for developing the Mayor's Housing Strategy the GLA will identify and consult with organisations and networks that represent hard-to-reach groups.	S L	GLA Voluntary organisations and advice agencies
11.9.	When appropriate, the CE sub-group should continue to invite views from proxy user groups such as Shelter, Crisis, the Homeless Families Network and other voluntary sector homeless groups whose networks can be utilised to gauge views.		CESG

Appendix 1: CET Terms of reference

The Community Engagement Taskforce will:

- Commission and oversee work to map the nature and extent of tenant and resident participation structures (including existing cross-tenure bodies) that have the potential to shape the strategic London-wide/regional agenda. This work should better identify where gaps exist and highlight and promote best practice in engaging with local communities.
- Extend previous joint working on consulting with Londoners around the Mayor's Housing Strategy by developing recommendations for appropriate consultation on regional housing issues with the sub-regional and regional and strategic levels to ensure a bottom up approach to consultation over the production of regional housing strategy, especially in relation to the future regional housing and planning structures.
- Provide linkages between this work and future regional engagement and consultation structures
- Make recommendations for the establishment, funding and support of regional tenant structures in London that take into account the following:
 - Potential conflicts of interest between different types of residents in the same area (e.g. social sector tenants, social sector leaseholders, homeless households and households in the private sector);
 - The London context (e.g. high level of population turnover, ethnic and cultural diversity, high demand, and high land and property prices)
 - Links between the work of the Taskforce and the Mayor's Housing Forum and work done on a neighbourhood basis such as local area agreements and local strategic partnerships.

Appendix 2: List of reports and research commissioned by the Community Engagement Taskforce

1. LC survey - Housing in London - cross tenure engagement structures.
2. LC Survey; Housing in London – Resident engagement structures at the sub-regional level.
3. GLA Developing appropriate structures for consulting with homeless households on housing issues at a regional and strategic level (2006).
4. GLA Profile of tenants living in the private rented sector and uptake of Mayoral engagement mechanisms.
5. Housing Corporation papers on Innovation and Good Practice research 'inter alia'.
6. LHF Housing in London- listening to tenants and residents (2006).
7. Mapping tenant and resident engagement structures in local authorities (LC 2006).
8. Minutes of and papers received by the Community Engagement Taskforce.
9. Paper from West London Private Tenant's Network.
10. Report to the CET (London Tenants Federation)
11. Tenant and resident involvement in the regional agenda – Report for the London Housing Federation (Solon Community Network, September 2006) Report on RSLs.
12. Tenant and resident involvement in the regional agenda (Solon Community Network, July 2006) Report on LAs.

Other sources

1. GLA Consultation, communication and publicity plan (draft only 2006).
2. GLA/LC, London Housing Consultation and engagement structures – stakeholder consultation (Ipsos Mori 2006).
3. Key findings of the NHF Tenant Involvement Commission.

Appendix 3: Case study LB Brent

Brent has four (quarterly) Neighbourhood local area forums and five borough-wide Local Area Forums, some of which are resident-led whilst the remainder are borough-led. Although these bodies are open to all residents and officers, they do not discuss London-wide strategic housing issues.

Structure 1	Brent Social Housing Tenants Forum
<p>Nature of Structure</p>	<p>This is a tenant-led borough-wide social housing forum. Meetings take place on an ongoing (quarterly) basis and include discussions about the regional housing issues. Whilst meetings are facilitated by the borough the agenda is set by tenants and the current chair is a tenant of an RSL</p> <p>This forum was initially set up to help tenants resolve issues and take them to members, if need be, and to provide a two way process to disseminate information from/to the RSLs and LAs and tenants.</p> <p>However, following a recent review of this formal consultative structure (where between 20-30 tenants discuss a broad range of issues in larger meeting), recommendations have been approved (in principle by the RSLs) for a move towards smaller project groups covering specific issues linked with the LSP (e.g. crime and ASB). These groups will be lead by individual RSLs working with their own tenants and include other interested RSLs (and their tenants).</p> <p>At present the forum is resourced in two ways – i.e. through officer time or via each RSL allocating a small amount towards running the forum - but this will be reviewed in futures once the new structure is established.</p> <p>To supplement the existing forum there is a Brent Social Housing Tenants Conference which is a bi-annual tenant-led event. However, following the launch of the new structure it is proposed that it will become an annual conference, but remain open to all Brent’s social housing tenants</p>
<p>Membership</p>	<p>Membership consists of tenants (from the 10 RSLs operating in Brent and from their ALMO Brent Housing Partnership), officers and councillors. Membership is restricted to two tenant reps per organisations plus an officer (the typical attendance rate is 60%).</p>

NB - This type of structure has been recognised as good practice by other boroughs such as LB Newham which, following a benchmarking process, is currently in the process of establishing a Social Housing Tenants forum to include tenants from RSLs, this should compliment Newham’s their existing borough and sub-regional forums which include RSL tenants and officers.

Structure 2	Private Housing Forum
Nature of Structure	This is a borough-wide private sector residents and landlords forum which meets on an ongoing (Quarterly) basis and is borough-led. Regional housing issues are discussed.
Membership	Attended by mixture of officers, councillors, private sector tenants and landlords

Structure 3	Housing Conference and Exhibition
Nature of Structure	This is a borough-wide specialist annual event that is facilitated by the borough on behalf of the Housing Strategic Partnership. Regional housing issues are discussed at this event.
Membership	Officers (borough / RSL / partners), residents and voluntary organisations.

Structure 4	Housing Theme Group
Nature of Structure	This is a sub-group of Brent's Housing Strategic Partnership but which is facilitated by the borough and is convened on a quarterly basis. Regional housing issues are discussed at this event.
Membership	Tenants and residents.

Appendix 4

Mayor's Housing Forum Community Engagement Sub-Group

Draft Terms of Reference

The Mayor's Housing Forum sub-groups

The Mayor's Housing Forum (MHF) will determine the sub-groups it wishes to set up, with the agreement of the Mayor, to assist it in carrying out its roles and responsibilities. All sub-groups will have terms of reference agreed by the Forum and will normally be time-limited. The Forum will be responsible for overseeing the work of the sub-groups it sets up.

The three existing permanent sub-groups of the Forum and the Community Engagement Sub-Group to be set up from January 2007 will continue until publication of the draft Mayor's Housing Strategy (MHS) in July 2007 when they will all be reviewed.

The sub-groups will have independent elected chairs approved by the Forum who will be invited to attend the Mayor's Housing Forum. All sub-group meetings will be serviced by the GLA.

Purpose of the Community Engagement Sub-Group

The Mayor's Housing Forum Community Engagement Sub-Group (CESG) forms a key part of the housing consultation and engagement structures set up to support and advise the Mayor in developing the MHS.

Roles and responsibilities

The primary roles and responsibilities of the CESG are:

- 1 To act as an advisory body to the Mayor in the development of the Mayor's Housing Strategy and its implementation with regard to resident and tenant participation issues.
- 2 To work with the Mayor on developing the consultation framework for the Mayor's Housing Strategy and seek active engagement of organisations and communities who are not directly represented in the Mayor's formal engagement and consultation structures.
- 3 To support the Mayor in reviewing the implementation of the Community Engagement Taskforce (CET) recommendations and action plan, monitoring progress against its priorities and targets.

- 4 To share information and develop ideas and recommendations about tenant and resident participation structures at sub-regional and regional level in London.
- 5 To receive and consider key documentation on research, strategies and policy initiatives on tenant and resident participation issues and review the resources required for delivering these.
- 6 To produce a brief written up-date for each MHF meeting and make recommendations as appropriate.
- 7 To promote equality, diversity and inclusivity in the development of the Mayor's Housing Strategy.

Membership

The membership of the Mayor's Housing Forum CESG is made up of housing stakeholders in London and representatives of key community engagement organisations who bring experience, knowledge and expertise about different aspects of resident and tenant participation in London.

It is expected that the person(s) nominated by member organisations should be able to attend on a regular basis and the GLA should be notified about any substitutions.

The following organisations will be invited to become members of the CESG:

- Mayor's Housing Equalities Standing Group
- Homelessness sector (2)
- London Councils (2)
- London Housing Federation
- London Tenants Federation (2)
- Housing Corporation
- Housing association residents/tenants (2)
- Private rented sector residents/tenants (2)
- London Leaseholders Network
- Communities and Local Government
- Greater London Authority
- Government Office for London (observers)

Other members can be invited to join the group at the discretion of the chair of the Sub-Group.

Working method

The Community Engagement Sub-Group will be a forum for exploring, developing and sharing ideas. It will also examine the progression of strategies relating to community engagement across London. This will be achieved through meetings,

identifying the need for research, championing good and innovative practice, expert speakers and, where necessary and appropriate, smaller time-limited focused, task and finish groups.

Chair and secretariat

The chair will be independent of the GLA and selected by the members of the Sub-Group for approval by the Mayor's Housing Forum.

The chair is Chloe Fletcher from London Councils.

The GLA will provide a secretariat service.

Frequency, location and timing of meetings

The Mayor's Housing Forum CESG will meet quarterly, three to four weeks before each meeting of the Mayor's Housing Forum. The chair can, however, call additional meetings as appropriate.

A timetable of meetings will be drawn up annually and submitted to the members of the Sub-Group for approval.

Communications

A draft agenda for the Mayor's Housing Forum CESG will be circulated by the GLA three to four weeks before each meeting to provide an opportunity for members of the Sub-Group to comment and suggest any additional items. The agenda and papers for the sub-groups will be circulated at least a week before each meeting.

The GLA will maintain a record and distribution list of attendees at the Mayor's Housing Forum and its sub-groups, which may be made available for other attendees to facilitate discussion of any urgent issues or items between meetings.

The CESG will operate in an open and transparent way. For example, agendas and minutes from meetings will be published on the GLA website.

Review

The Community Engagement Sub-Group will be reviewed in July 2007.