

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee

Review of Registered Social Landlords



October 2008

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
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- Those Registered Social Landlords that responded to the Committee's survey

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Foreword

On behalf the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee, I am pleased to introduce the final report of our review of Registered Social Landlords.

The Committee have taken the opportunity to examine those Registered Social Landlords (or Housing Associations) that operate within Stockton Borough, and their relationship with the Council. The review was also timely due to the impact of the current housing market.

It is clear that RSLs are key partners within the Borough, and not only deliver a range of affordable housing, but also play a vital part in the wider regeneration of the Borough. RSLs will have an increasing role and the Committee have identified ways in which to ensure that partnership working in the Borough continues to improve.

I would like to thank all those that have contributed in some way to our review, including Jane Edmends, Housing Strategy and Development Manager, who has given invaluable support as our link officer, and I commend our report and recommendations to you.



Councillor Alison Trainer
Chair



Councillor Julia Roberts
Vice-Chair

Original Brief

1. Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

Liveability:

- Make Stockton a cleaner, greener place to live, work and visit
- Deliver quality and choice in the housing market and address housing market failure
- Prevent homelessness

Community Safety:

- Reduce anti-social behaviour and offensive incidents

2. What are the main issues?

- RSLs work in partnership with the Council to deliver affordable housing (for sale and rent) within the Borough. At the present time there are 12 RSLs in the Borough who rent social housing properties, this equates to approx. 3,150 properties (at 31.3.07). Their stock is dispersed across the various townships (including rural locations). In addition, a number of other RSLs are entering into partnerships with private sector developers to deliver affordable housing for sale (secured through Section 106 Planning Agreements).
- As the LA is currently unable to build new housing, SBC rely on effective partnerships with RSL's to deliver much needed new housing for rent. New housing is funded through National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) monies, which are provided by the Housing Corporation. NAHP is allocated on a competitive bidding process and bids will only be funded if they are supported by the LA in terms of delivering the LA and regional strategic housing priorities. In the last round of bidding to the Housing Corporation (Nov. 07) the value of funding sought (for investment into the Borough) from our RSL partners was £93.4million.
- RSL's are also key partners in the wider 'place shaping agenda' and, in actively assisting the Council, deliver housing regeneration in the Hardwick, Mandale and Parkfield areas.
- Stockton is currently working in partnership with the other TV LA's to sign the first NE sub-regional protocol with the Housing Corporation.

3. The Thematic Select Committee's overall aim/ objectives in doing this work is:

To assess the relationship between the Council and those RSLs who operate within Stockton Borough and identify improvements where possible.

4. The possible outputs/outcomes are:

Strategic development:

- Evaluation of new build schemes for rent and determine whether they address our stated objectives and provide value for money.
- Assessment of how RSLs engage with the Borough's strategic planning arrangements and the Local Strategic Partnership.
- Assessment of the future business plans for RSLs - for example have they recently or are they considering forming group structures (if so what do they see as the potential benefits of this development)/where do they see their future focus i.e. special needs housing or general needs housing or both/Medium to long term growth/expansion plans/Post decent homes what are their plans for future improvement of existing stock
- Identification of best practice and possible criteria for developing a 'preferred list of partner RSLs' to work in partnership on S106 sites to deliver affordable housing.

Housing management:

- Evaluation of partnership arrangements to ensure they are effective in terms of addressing housing need ie. nomination arrangements and complementary policies
- Assessment of whether RSL partners are taking an active role in the communities in which they are present ie. are they good landlords and what additional community wide initiatives do they undertake/support. Comparison of costs for housing management/tenant involvement with Tristar.
- Assessment of whether RSL partners are assisting the LA in terms of delivering and supporting the wider 'homeless prevention agenda'.
- Ensure actions contained within the Sub-Regional Protocol are delivered.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Registered Social Landlords (commonly known as Housing Associations) provide a significant contribution towards the provision of social housing in the Borough. They are key partners with the Local Authority through their management of existing housing, development of new affordable housing, and wider social and community investment activities in local neighbourhoods. Currently there are 12 operating within Stockton-on-Tees, and together they own and manage over 3000 properties. As acknowledged by the new inspection regime of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), RSLs and the Council are key partners and must effectively work together in order to achieve desired outcomes for the local area. It was therefore considered opportune to review the contribution made by RSLs to the Borough, and their relationship with the Council, scrutinise their effectiveness, and identify areas of best practice and where appropriate areas for improvement.
- 1.2 It is clear from the evidence received during the review that Registered Social Landlords are playing an increasing role in providing, not only for the housing needs of the Borough, but also for its physical and social regeneration. In recognition of the significant role played by Housing Associations within the Borough, the Committee have made a series of recommendations in order to continue the good work and ensure that further improvements are made.
- 1.3 The Committee have found that the relationship between Stockton Council and locally operational RSLs is generally good at both the operational and strategic level. There are areas for improvement in terms of communication at the local level, especially with regard to the role of the ward councillor. At a strategic level, (whilst recognising the capacity constraints placed upon the smaller RSLs due to their size) the Committee believe further encouragement is needed to ensure that all RSLs play a fuller part in the role of Stockton Renaissance. Partnership working allows the RSLs and Council to discuss the key housing priorities and objectives for the Borough, and to ensure that RSL activity is contributing towards the delivery of Community Strategy priorities. Therefore the Committee recommend:
1. **that the communication exchange between RSL partners and the local authority is improved by:**
 - a. **drafting a protocol which the Council should encourage RSLs to use when communicating with Members, and for it to include reference to providing appropriate ward members with key RSL contact details (eg. patch managers/area managers) on an annual basis and request that these contacts are kept up to date,**
 - b. **including this up to date information in the induction packs of new Members as appropriate;**
 - c. **providing all RSLs with general information regarding the role/remit of 'ward councillors' as a means of general awareness raising of their roles within the local community and request this information is shared with their front line housing staff;**
 - d. **providing RSLs with key contact details including ward members and appropriate Council Officers on an annual basis, and encouraging RSL officers based within a local area to informally meet with the appropriate ward members as a matter of course;**
 - e. **SBC Housing Service advising ward members on the strategic role of the LA in dealing with complaints relating to RSLs.**

- 2. that steps are taken to ensure all partner RSLs are active partners in the LSP, in particular, the thematic Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership.**

- 1.4 The implementation of the Tees Valley Sub-Regional Housing Corporation Protocol (signed by all Local Authorities within the Tees Valley) is aimed at ensuring a joined up approach to many issues facing local authorities in their relationships with RSLs across the sub-region. To emphasise the importance of this document, the Housing Corporation are also partners in this Protocol, represented by both their 'investment' and 'regulation' arms.

- 1.5 The Committee recognised that the introduction of the protocol is a 'positive' step in terms of strengthening the Authority's position. However, issues were raised regarding the practices of some RSLs. In order to address this, and ensure the Authority is in a position to respond effectively it was felt that the Council needed to set out the standards expected of RSLs, ensure that they are adhered to as far as is possible, and that RSL partners actively support and work towards the Borough's social and economic priorities. On this basis the Committee is proposing that for RSLs wishing to be future development partners with the Council, a framework of standards is introduced. This is to be used to inform the selection of partners for future funding bids (enabling the Council to set out what is expected of RSLs and action that will be taken should these standards not be maintained), and in addition, the Council should strongly encourage private developers to use the framework when selecting partners to deliver the affordable housing element of s106 sites, thereby providing a consistency of approach.

- 1.6 As RSL involvement increases in the Borough, the Committee believe it is important for standards to be set in place, and for these to include issues such as the need for a local presence in their neighbourhoods. These standards should, where possible, be consistently applied to all RSLs. Therefore for those RSLs that are already present in the Borough and act mainly as landlords (ie. not developing new properties), the Committee is proposing an annual review process that will take into account the views of key stakeholders. The Committee recommend:
 - 3. a) that the Council create a framework of RSLs who wish to develop within the Borough and this framework be used to identify those RSLs capable of working with the Council to secure future funding, and to assist private developers to identify suitable RSLs to work with them on the deliverability of affordable housing on s106 sites.**

 - b) that the criteria for RSLs on the framework include:**
 - their role as developing organisations;
 - their role as a key local authority strategic partner in order to support agendas including homelessness, training and employment, and the physical and social regeneration of the Borough, for example by attendance at the Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership;
 - the standards expected in terms of service and presence within Neighbourhoods.

c) that the criteria and membership of the framework be regularly reviewed, and an annual update be reported to Housing and Community Safety Select Committee.

4. that in order to ensure that non-developing RSLs are 'good landlords', promote tenant involvement, participate in community involvement, and that they attend the Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership, the Council should undertake an annual review, taking into account the views of tenants/Members/key stakeholders including relevant SBC services, and to work with appropriate regulatory bodies should this be necessary following the review. The results of this review should be reported to Housing and Community Safety Select Committee.

1.7 In addition to their role as landlords, RSLs have a critical role to play in assisting the Authority achieve its wider economic and social priorities. Therefore the Committee reviewed how the various RSLs operated to achieve these goals and in particular sought details of how they operate their wider community development activities. The Committee has found several good examples of community investment schemes, and wish to encourage further good practice in this regard as well as using this as criteria in the framework and review process, in order to ensure that RSLs play a major role in the communities in which they are based. Therefore the Committee are recommending:

5. that following recommendations 3) and 4), the Council evaluate the work undertaken by RSLs specifically in relation to their 'community investment funds/activity' on an annual basis and to share best practice between partner RSLs and other housing providers, using the meetings of the Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership.

Both the framework and review process will add clarity to the Council's expectations and allow the Council to ensure that the contribution made by housing associations to the Borough's communities is maximised.

1.8 The strategic role of the local authority in attracting new funding into the Borough has been recognised by the Housing Corporation (which funds the development of new affordable housing). As of September 2008, the authority had secured c.£8.6m worth of national affordable investment funds from the 2008-11 round of funding, through effective partnership working with RSLs in the Borough; this will deliver 225 new units. In addition to securing monies from the Corporation, new affordable housing can also be secured on private sector development sites. Whilst there are positive examples of new units secured through S106 agreements, the Committee have identified that expertise should be further developed within the Council regarding the negotiation of planning obligations. These skills will become increasingly 'tested' given the current housing market. The Committee recommend:

6. That in relation to planning obligations, building on the policy work already undertaken as part of the LDF process, officers of Housing and Planning Services (and other services as appropriate) should undertake joint work or training as deemed appropriate by the Heads of

Housing and Planning Services to examine best practice in order to further develop experience and expertise when negotiating s106 agreements that contain provision for affordable housing, in order to promote greater understanding of the opportunities and constraints contained within and to maximise the number of units delivered through this method, and that the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee should receive an annual report stating what joint work or training has been completed.

- 1.9 The review took place against a background of a worsening financial and housing market situation. This has the potential to impact on the deliverability of RSL-led housing regeneration programmes, and a detrimental effect on the ability of people to remain in their homes. With the development of shared ownership products now comprising a substantial part of Housing Associations' tenure mix, and any increase in re-possession having the potential to impact upon housing need and homelessness, Registered Social Landlords have a key part to play in order to tackle the effects of the credit crunch. The Committee were pleased to see the development of initiatives to mitigate the effects of this and would encourage this further, in conjunction with the local authority. The housing market and its policy context remain dynamic and in order to ensure Members are aware of important changes in the market, new local and national initiatives, and the potential implications on residents and housing providers, the Committee recommend:

7a). that Members of the Housing and Community Select Committee (and all Members where appropriate) be provided with timely information relating to the 'housing market' (including for example key Government announcements and projects initiated within the Borough).

b). that the Housing Service actively seeks to bid for/secure resources to deliver new housing initiatives (for example 'Mortgage Rescue Packages')

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 This report presents Cabinet with the findings of the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee in relation to its review of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). The topic was identified at a meeting of the Scrutiny Liaison Forum in March 2008, and subsequently included into the scrutiny work programme at a meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee in April.
- 2.2 Registered Social Landlords (commonly known as Housing Associations) provide a significant contribution towards the provision of social housing in the Borough, and the development of new affordable housing, in partnership with the Local Authority. Currently there are 12 operating within Stockton-on-Tees and as of March 2007 this equated to c.3150 properties.
- 2.3 It was considered opportune to review the contribution made by RSLs to the Borough, and their relationship with the Council. The new inspection regime of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will require the Council and key partners to show that they are effectively working together in order to achieve desired outcomes for the local area.
- 2.4 The review consisted of an initial scene-setting meeting, followed by three meetings to address the following themes in turn: operational issues, RSLs as regeneration partners, and the future plans of RSLs. The review incorporated a site visit to three RSL developments, namely Parkside Court Extra Care Scheme in Thornaby, Aspen Gardens Extra Care Scheme in Hardwick, and the redevelopment of new older persons housing on the former Eden House Sheltered Housing scheme in Billingham. Members of the Planning Committee were invited to the meeting held during the site visit to Aspen, as this focussed on the regeneration and development theme and it was considered to be useful for their work.
- 2.5 In addition to meeting with representatives of Endeavour Housing, North Star Housing Group (includes Endeavour), Isos Housing Group (includes NomadE5), Erimus Housing and Anchor Trust, the Committee surveyed all RSLs currently operating within the Borough, from which 8 replies were received. Replies were received from: Home, NomadE5, Endeavour, Anchor, Places for People, Habinteg, Erimus Housing and Tees Valley. Replies were outstanding from: Accent, Hanover, Housing21, and Railway Housing.
- 2.6 The review has gathered information on a number of issues, and a number of recommendations have subsequently been made.

3.0 Background

National

- 3.1 RSLs are non-profit making organisations providing affordable housing, either for social rent or low cost home ownership (LCHO).¹ There are nearly 2000 housing associations in England, owning two million homes, and housing over five million people. As well as providing a range of housing services, RSLs are frequently key partners of Local Authorities, not only in terms of helping to provide much needed accommodation, but also in relation to assisting with the development and regeneration of local communities.
- 3.2 The Housing Corporation is currently the national agency for regulating RSLs within England, and for investing in new affordable housing. RSLs must be registered with the Corporation.
- 3.3 The Government's investment in affordable housing is mainly delivered through the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP). This is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government and delivered by the Corporation. Bids are invited from qualified partners and these need to have the support of the Local Authority, and so be in line with local and regional policy, in order to succeed. The National Programme allocation for 2008-11 so far is £8.6bn. The funding pays for approximately 45% of new homes for rent and LCHO, and the original aim was to achieve 70,000 new homes per year by 2011-12.
- 3.4 The Government have announced changes to the structure of the functions currently undertaken by the Corporation. The regulatory and funding arms of the Corporation will be separated into two new bodies. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) will be created by merging the investment arm with other regeneration agencies including English Partnerships, and will become the new national body for delivering housing and regeneration programmes. The regulatory function will be taken up by the new, independent Tenant Services Authority (TSA).
- 3.5 At present the regulatory assessment of RSLs is done via a traffic light system of monitoring, set against the following categories: viability; governance; management; use of Housing Corporation funds (development). All RSLs present in the Borough have a 'green light' against those categories that apply to them.² The Housing Corporation also produces a Regulatory Code and a number of guidance documents, setting out what is 'required' of RSLs, and also what they 'should' do.

Local

- 3.6 There are currently twelve RSLs operating within the Borough. These are:
 - Anchor

¹ Social rent is rent set at below market levels. LCHO includes shared equity and ownership schemes, including Social HomeBuy and NewBuild HomeBuy.

² Anchor Trust and Railway Housing have not been developing new homes and so the Development category does not apply.

- Accent
- Endeavour Housing Association
- Erimus Housing
- Habinteg
- Hanover
- Home
- Housing21
- NomadE5
- Places for People
- Railway Housing
- Tees Valley Housing

- 3.7 A breakdown of the stock in the Borough (as of 2007) is included at Appendix 1. This stock is generally in good condition due to its age and investment. The survey replies show that Habinteg has 4% of its stock non-decent and hopes to be fully compliant as an association in two years. Erimus has 14% of stock that still needs to meet the standard. However it should be noted that Erimus Housing took ownership of six sheltered housing schemes from Stockton Council following a Small Scale Voluntary Stock Transfer and tenant ballot. Of these six schemes, three have been modernised and now meet the Decent Homes standard (Lauder House, High Grange House, Ewbank Gardens), two are currently being re-developed (Eden House and Witham House) and the last (Derwent House) will be demolished by 2010. RSL stock is dispersed throughout all the Borough's townships and rural centres of population.
- 3.8 RSLs are responsible for all aspects of their own housing management, but the nature of RSLs varies throughout the country and this pattern is repeated in the Borough:
- Specialist RSLs concentrate on providing accommodation for specific sections of the community (although not always exclusively so). Anchor Trust provide housing for the older people, while Habinteg have a tradition of providing for those with disabilities. These are also national organisations, compared to other more locally based entities such as Tees Valley Housing.
 - There are organisations which only have a presence in the Borough and do not feature in the rest of the sub-region, specifically NomadE5.
 - RSLs may have developed an approach to 'community investment' and look to fund associated projects, but some do not
 - Some RSLs provide only a landlord function, whereas others are 'developers' and therefore aim to construct new affordable housing units.
- 3.9 The Council therefore has a range of partners, and some relationships are longstanding while others are new. For example, as detailed above, Erimus Housing only took over the ownership and management of Stockton Council's sheltered housing stock in July 2007. NomadE5 has a relatively new presence in the Borough following their selection as a key partner in order to deliver the Mandale Housing Regeneration scheme, whilst other RSLs have a longer history of ownership and management of properties in the Borough.

3.10 The five Tees Valley Local Authorities have recently joined together with the Housing Corporation to sign the Tees Valley Sub-Regional Housing Corporation Protocol (March 2008) in order to establish principles of co-operation and shared working. This follows the signing of a national version between the Corporation and the Local Government Association. The Protocol includes an Action Plan setting out how the five authorities and the Corporation will work together to achieve ten objectives. These objectives are:

1. Prevention of homelessness and access to housing options
2. Introduction and implementation of a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme
3. Working in partnership to maintain balanced and sustainable communities
4. Evaluate the delivery of new affordable housing and the management of existing affordable housing, through close engagement with RSLs, the Housing Corporation and other delivery partners
5. Increase the supply of affordable housing through PPS3
6. Aligning the provision of new Supported Housing to existing Supporting People strategies and resources
7. Working with RSLs, the police and other partners in promoting RESPECT
8. Working to promote and maintain decent communities/homes
9. Working to promote community cohesion
10. Community empowerment and participation

3.11 Extracts from the Action Plan contained within the Protocol can be found at Appendix 2.

4.0 Evidence/Findings

Operational relationship between Council and RSLs

4.1 The Committee found that RSLs and local authorities are viewed as being 'natural and essential' partners. The requirements in terms of how RSLs must co-operate with councils are set out in the Corporation's Regulatory Code and guidance. They must co-operate in order to enable councils to discharge their duties in relation to homeless households, people in priority housing need, vulnerable people and those covered by the Supporting People strategy. In addition, the Corporation's Good Practice Note, 'Working with Local Authorities', sets out a number of common areas for joint working and these include: creating and improving neighbourhoods; tackling homelessness; nominations and lettings; tackling anti-social behaviour (RSLs have a duty to co-operate with the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership); community cohesion; and asset management.

- **Nominations**

4.2 The Committee received evidence in relation to the local picture with regard to nominations, lettings and homelessness. Housing Associations have their own lettings and allocations policies, however local authorities have the right to 'nominate' people from their social housing waiting lists to RSL properties that become available. An RSL provides the Council with details of the property, the Council then checks the register and suggests the top three on the waiting list. If these are not successful then the Council sends another three – if these are not successful, the Council sends another three, or the RSL consults its own waiting lists. Refusals can be due to the need for RSLs to maintain sustainable communities and therefore a very prescriptive approach can be taken with regard to the household requirements for a particular property. Nominations may also be refused if there are issues in relation to rent arrears, or households having a history of anti-social behaviour. At the same time, those put forward by the Council may refuse the offer of an RSL property, and this also counts as an unsuccessful nomination. Nominations apply to a particular scheme only, rather than across the portfolio of the RSL's properties within the Borough.

4.3 The Committee found that although in the past there had been issues in relation to the take-up of nomination rights in the Borough, this situation is now resolved. Generally speaking Stockton Council has 100% nomination rights for the first lets of RSL properties on new housing schemes, and a right to nominate prospective tenants to 50% of the properties that subsequently become available. In 2000-01, only 9.5% of RSL lets were as a result of the Council's nomination. This was due to several factors including the unpopularity of social housing at that time. At the time the Council was experiencing annual voids of approximately 1588 properties, and was finding it difficult to find tenants for Council property regardless of empty RSL properties.

4.4 In the intervening years the demand for social housing has increased significantly, and this has combined with a reduction in tenancy turnover in Council housing due to the increasing standard of accommodation. Robust

monitoring arrangements have been put in place by the Council and RSL partners are required to complete monthly returns setting out details of all their lets, including whether they were direct lets by the RSL themselves or were as a result of a nomination. The Council regularly attains a minimum of its nomination rights. The percentage of recent lets that were as a result of a nomination is as follows:

2005-06 - 51%
2006-07 - 60%
2007-08 - 54%

4.5 The 2007-08 figure equates to 253 nomination request out of a total of 469 properties let by RSLs in the period, 196 of which proceeded to tenancies. The monitoring system has raised awareness of Council expectations, and in 2007-08 Stockton was rated 6th out of 23 North East authorities for the percentage of RSL lets achieved through nominations.

4.6 Registered Social Landlords are being encouraged to join the Tees Valley Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme and make properties available through this process, with an eventual target of letting 100% of properties through CBL. The Committee noted that the sub-regional approach means that organisations have to work together and produce joined-up policies, such as common allocations and suspension policies. CBL has the potential to lend further transparency to the lettings process as RSLs will need to state as to why particular applications have been refused.

- **Homelessness**

4.7 The Housing Corporation recognised that more needed to be done regarding the issue of homelessness and homelessness prevention, when it published a national strategy in November 2006, outlining the duties of RSLs in relation to this issue (as set out in the Housing Act 1996). In particular it highlights the need for effective partnerships with the local authority – it states that, ‘all housing associations should: actively engage with local authorities at both strategic and operational levels in communities where they have a role and presence; either individually or collectively, agree with local authorities at local, sub-regional and regional levels how they will contribute to the development and delivery of sustainable communities strategies to tackle homelessness; work with other local associations to ensure that collaborative approaches are adopted to tackle and prevent homelessness, taking into account the needs and priorities of local communities.’

4.8 In addition, the strategy refers to the need to prevent homelessness through tenancy support, maximise the use of existing stock including efficiencies in void performance, and building sustainable communities, including through engagement with choice based lettings.

4.9 The Committee found that in 2007-08 only 2.5% of the total RSL nomination lets were to households the Local Authority had a duty to house under homelessness legislation. This equates to 6 properties and 6 households. It is recognised that many of the homeless households that come to the Council often have a range of associated issues that are related to their being homeless. It is therefore sometimes difficult to ensure that RSL partners always take on such households as they may not be able, for example, to provide the appropriate support mechanisms.

- 4.10 SBC's Housing Options Team continue to liaise with partner RSLs regarding homelessness strategies but to date are only aware of Endeavour and Tees Valley as having such strategies in place. (Erimus Housing, as the RSL created following the transfer of Middlesbrough's housing stock, are new to Stockton but operate the homelessness service in Middlesbrough on behalf of Middlesbrough Council. In 2006 they were named as a regional champion due to their performance in this area.)
- 4.11 The Committee noted that RSL representatives stressed the need to get more rented accommodation on the ground as a main method of assisting with the issue of housing need generally. Due to the current nature of the housing market, tenants are reluctant to move from rented accommodation therefore the turnover of vacancies has reduced. This has a knock-on effect as people currently in temporary accommodation schemes are not able to move out.
- 4.12 In order to ensure that these issues remain a priority, the Committee was informed that Stockton Council was intending to call a meeting with all partnering RSLs in order to discuss 'a strategic approach to sustaining communities, meeting the housing needs of vulnerable clients and preventing homelessness'. In addition, the Council's need for effective partnership working was requested and included as a priority objective in the Tees Valley Sub-Regional Protocol, specifically as part of 'Objective 1) Prevention of homelessness'. The actions include the development of sub-regional nominations agreement in order to maximise the number of properties put forward through choice based lettings, a review of the sub-regional homelessness forum, and the promotion of best practice following a review of current RSL performance in the sub-region. To reinforce the Authority's position, RSL performance in tackling homelessness will be incorporated in the Committee's proposed framework, along with nomination performance, as a criteria to inform the selection of future development partners. This issue will also be monitored through the proposed annual review of non-developing RSL partners, enabling appropriate action to be taken.

- **Community Safety**

- 4.13 The Committee found that there was a multi-agency approach to tackling anti-social behaviour within the Borough. The Committee found that RSLs are involved in a number of ways including:
- The Landlord Liaison Project - RSLs are accessing this in order to gather information on the tenancy history of prospective tenants and identify any previous problems.
 - ASBOs/CRASBOs - In Stockton, all Anti-Social Behaviour Order and Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Orders are applied for through the Council. This allows for more effective monitoring of trends, and compares to other areas where a range of agencies can apply for these separately, including RSLs.
 - ASB casework - Accent Homes utilises its own ASB casework officer, whereas others including Tees Valley and Endeavour buy into the SBC service.

4.14 RSLs are now subject to a duty to co-operate with the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership which in Stockton is the Safer Stockton Partnership. In addition, the Tees Valley Protocol has an objective in order to contribute towards the Government's RESPECT agenda. This includes encouraging all RSLs in the sub-region to sign up to the agenda, reviewing best practice and its application locally, and encouraging RSLs to sign up to the RESPECT quality mark for housing management standards. The RESPECT agenda is also monitored through the Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership, as this is one of the actions emanating from the corporate Community Cohesion Strategy.

- **Tenant satisfaction and involvement**

4.15 As part of the review, the Committee requested information in relation to tenant involvement and satisfaction. Using national Tenant Satisfaction Survey results in relation to those RSLs currently operating in the Borough, these show that, on average, satisfaction with 'overall service' is at 82.5%, 'participation' is at 62.2%, and 'repairs and maintenance' is at 80.5%. The breakdown of results is part of Appendix 1. Those who returned the Committee's survey, report that the number of formal complaints made by residents in Stockton Borough was relatively low, and almost all those complaints that were made were resolved.

4.16 The Committee found that when complaints had been received, they had in some instances been used to improve services. In Stockton, Tees Valley Housing have local partnerships with the police, schools and residents in order to successfully reduce anti-social behaviour at Blakeston Court. Other examples include the introduction of a newsletter (Endeavour), improved defect reporting mechanisms (NomadE5), improved customer information recording (Anchor), estate walkabout publicity improvements (Places for People), and changes to gas servicing hours to enable after hours work to take place (Erimus).

4.17 Aside from specific complaints and national surveys, tenant satisfaction is measured through methods including surveys and discussion forums. As well as the importance of measuring satisfaction the Committee believe it is important for RSL residents to be kept informed and up-to-date with developments, and to have the ability to influence decisions affecting their communities. Of those surveyed, aside from Anchor, all have at least one tenant Board member. The Housing Corporation wants to see this situation maintained for all larger associations. It is also apparent that there are a range of mechanisms in place locally through which tenants and leaseholders can exert their influence. These include involvement on service improvement groups, but also the opportunity to influence the spending, including area based budgets. NomadE5 have a Tenants Options Budget which local residents can apply for funding to improve their local environment, Tees Valley have an Estate Improvement Panel made up of tenants who allocate funds from a £30,000 budget for projects right across the association's stock, Endeavour allocate funds to the Norton Grange Housing Co-operative and their Tenant's Advisory Panel which provides grants to community projects, and Erimus provide £1000 to the Stockton Area Housing Forum. As with many aspects of RSL service provision, these techniques vary from association to association, and depend on the size and type of the

organisation in question. Further details of the range of methods employed by RSLs operating in the Borough are outlined in Appendix 3.

- **Communication**

4.18 Following the Committee's survey, and through meeting representatives at Committee meetings, it is possible to state that communication between the Council and partners RSLs is generally very good at both the strategic and operational level. Most RSLs appear to be aware of the key contacts in Stockton Council regarding housing (including housing options/strategy/nominations/benefits), community safety, housing regeneration, Supporting People and also Tristar Homes. Feedback to the Committee also states that generally, Stockton Council is regarded as being 'very good' or 'excellent' at communicating with RSL partners.

4.19 Members of the Committee expressed the importance of tenants knowing who to contact within their estates. This is seen as especially important when RSLs are new to the area (and so have their main operational headquarters elsewhere), and that the need for a 'presence on the ground' within new housing estates must be emphasised. Some Members of the Committee have reported sometimes having difficulties when trying to contact RSL staff in order to resolve local, ward issues, and that there could be further improvements to the arrangements for ward level communication. In addition, some RSLs would prefer more information regarding key contacts within the Council, and the Committee believe it would be appropriate for the Council to provide regular updates regarding these key contacts. The Committee see this as a two-way process and in order to further improve the communication exchanges between the Council and locally based RSLs, and to highlight the role of the elected councillor, the Committee have therefore proposed a series of measures within its recommendations.

- **Local Strategic Partnership**

4.20 The importance of including housing associations and the knowledge they bring, within local partnership arrangements is widely acknowledged. The Housing Corporation expects RSLs to actively engage with local authorities and agree with them as to how they will contribute towards the delivery of local strategic priorities, and to play an active part in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), either individually or collectively. The Corporation recognises that the extent to which RSLs will be willing and able to become involved will vary from area to area, but states that 'the benefits of good quality partnership working are well established ... [and therefore] we expect to see continuous improvements in RSL engagement with partnership working ... If associations are not involved, it is more difficult to align their priorities with local strategies and local partnerships have less delivery capability'.

4.21 Within Stockton the LSP is Stockton Renaissance, and contains a number of thematic partnerships, one of which is the Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership. The Committee's survey assessed levels of engagement with the Partnership. It found that not all RSLs in the Borough attend the Partnership as a matter of course, although in their responses two offered their contact details for future inclusion. Those who responded to the survey and who did attend the Partnership, all 'strongly agreed' that its agenda items were 'relevant to my organisation's work.'

- 4.22 Representation from Endeavour stated that the Partnership was better attended compared to other similar arrangements they attended elsewhere. No suggestions for improvements were made regarding the workings of the partnership, aside from a request for sufficient notice of agenda items. The Committee believe that membership and engagement with the Partnership is a key method of ensuring that RSLs are integrated within the local arrangements, and that it should be made a requirement of future involvement with RSLs.

Registered Social Landlords as Partners in the Regeneration of the Borough

- **Investment In Sustainable Communities**

- 4.23 The Committee found that as the presence of RSLs increases within the Borough, they become ever more important partners in the physical and social regeneration of the Borough. The Committee was particularly keen to see the contribution made by RSLs in relation to ensuring sustainable communities, including through the development of 'community investment'. Community investment refers to projects that show that housing associations are active in the communities in which they operate, for instance employability initiatives and work with local schools, alongside the traditional housing management role. This is also linked to the implementation of area based budgets which allow tenants to influence spending on such things as local security and environmental improvements as outlined above.
- 4.24 Although not a statutory requirement, RSLs often undertake such work and the Corporation recognises that 'increasingly, associations are providing services to neighbourhoods and communities beyond their tenants'. From the survey, NomadE5, Endeavour, Places for People, Erimus and Tees Valley are engaged in community investment projects to a greater or lesser extent. Places for People have a national agenda aimed at tackling worklessness and local work on a more diverse range of issues, whilst NomadE5 are developing their approach to this. As part of the Mandale scheme, their Neighbourhood Investment Manager is working with Council officers to produce an action plan for community investment. The Committee were also provided with the following examples (amongst others):
- Endeavour are: developing an approach to worklessness in the Tees Valley with the aim of engaging traditionally hard to reach groups; providing an Enterprise Fund in order to assist people with genuine costs in relation to gaining further skills and education; developing community links at the Aspen Gardens scheme at Hardwick, including inviting the local community to use the facilities on site, arranging work between older and younger residents, and offering work placements for young people.
 - Tees Valley are involved in raising funds for a multi-use games area and nature walk in an area of Billingham that is currently subject to fly-tipping and ASB, and have recently completed the successful Open House Project which was aimed at increasing the number of Black and Ethnic Minority workers in housing – 70% of those on placement through the scheme found a mainstream employment position due to

their experience of the project (Endeavour and Tristar Homes were also partners in this project, which was funded through the European Social Fund). There is also a Community Development Officer in place and they are responsible for a delegated grants budget which provides funds for community groups which involves or benefits Tees Valley tenants.

- Erimus Housing have numerous projects branded under the 'Erimus Futures' initiative (although mainly these are based in Middlesbrough reflecting the location of the majority of their stock). These focus on children and young people and include:
 - PEER Kids – this is a citizenship course based in schools and aimed at raising awareness of the effects of ASB, racism, bullying and vandalism;
 - Erimus Holiday Club – this provides activities for young people during the holiday period;
 - Erimus Experience – an extended work experience programme aimed at year 10 and 11 pupils, delivered in stages each leading to further responsibility
 - E2E Programme (Entry to Work) – this is funded by the Learning and Skills Council and provides participants with experience in order to inform decisions regarding careers; it is aimed at reducing the number of those Not in Employment, Education or Training.
 - Erimus Charitable Fund – this fund supports young people and those from the BME community. Billingham Guides received a £500 grant from the fund during 2008.

4.25 The Committee recognise the good effect which these projects can have and the important role that housing associations have with regard to ensuring sustainable communities. The Committee believe that these schemes can be used as criteria for selecting future development partners, and that examples of local schemes should be shared in order to spread best practice in this area.

4.26 Within specific area based housing regeneration schemes, those RSLs that are key partners have an even greater role to play in terms of ensuring the sustainability of the new neighbourhoods. Alongside the Council and appointed private developers, RSLs partners play a key role in delivering the Council's ambitions for the transformation of these areas. This is apparent with Tees Valley in Parkfield, Endeavour in Hardwick, and NomadE5 in Mandale.

- **Housing Associations as developers**

4.27 The Committee found that Registered Social Landlords, in partnership with local authorities, continue to play a vital role in providing new affordable housing, whether through the utilisation of Housing Corporation funding, or through investing their own resources. Since the early 1990s, RSLs have been the main providers of affordable housing; registered landlords can 'deliver more units for a given amount of public money because they can

access private finance.³ Since 2004, private developers and Arms Length Management Organisations are also eligible to bid for grant money, with standards protected through contracts. In the north east the majority of bids are from RSLs.

- 4.28 The National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) is the main source of funding. The Committee noted that the majority of the funding from the NAHP is secured by the South East region. Out of the £8.6bn available nationally, the North East allocation for the 2008-11 period stands at £162m, agreed by the North East Assembly, via the North East Housing Board. £139m remained for new schemes after commitments relating to the 2006-08 programme were factored in.
- 4.29 This funding is available on a competitive bidding process, and bids from RSLs wishing to develop housing need to be supported by the local authority to have any chance of succeeding. Until now there had been a six-monthly bidding round, complemented by Regular Market Engagement (RME) which allowed extra funds to be allocated enabling flexibility in the system. From September 2008, all bids can be made on a continuous basis, although these will still be set against regional priorities.
- 4.30 The North East Regional Housing Strategy has set a general target of achieving 800 homes for rent and 200 for shared ownership each year up until 2011. Regionally, £68m has been allocated so far, out of the £162m available and following bidding processes. The targets for rent and shared ownership are further set against the region's strategic targets in relation to the type of housing needed in terms of: rejuvenation of the housing stock; affordability; meeting community needs (eg. extra care schemes). The £68m has been allocated as follows: 42% for rejuvenation (683 homes), 31% for affordability (544 homes), and 27% to meet community needs (399 homes). Set against the original aims of the Strategy, the 'rejuvenation' figure is too low, and the 'affordability' share too high, and this will need to be addressed in future bidding rounds.
- 4.31 The Committee found that Stockton has an excellent track record in terms of attracting Corporation funding to develop affordable housing in the Borough. The Housing Corporation praised the approach taken by Stockton Council in relation to strategic housing, and this is reflected in the results of recent rounds of funding:
- 2004 – 2006: Over £9.5m funding secured
2006 – 2008: Over £4.7m funding secured (set in the context of less money available nationally)
- 4.32 So far under the current 2008-11 round, the Borough has secured c.£8.6m. £5.6m was secured under the first bidding round; this equated to 148 homes and was the second highest allocation in the region. A further £2.9m has been secured through Regular Market Engagement, meaning a total of 225 new units for the period.
- 4.33 The Tees Valley as a whole continues to perform better than other sub-regions as it regularly gains more funding than its percentage target, as set by the Housing Board. This is a reflection of the quality of bids that are being put

³ *Delivering Affordable Housing*, Communities and Local Government, 2006

forward for determination by developers in the area, however should other areas improve then the Tees Valley may do less well in relative terms in the future.

- 4.34 The Committee found that the 2008-11 period will see a total RSL-led investment programme worth £26.9m so far. This reflects the fact that new housing schemes are also financed by the RSLs themselves, together with Corporation grants, and that some schemes are funded without recourse to using grant money. An example is Stockton's sheltered housing modernisation; following the transfer to Erimus, the six schemes will see an investment programme of £6m.
- 4.35 This investment has contributed towards the affordable housing element of key regeneration schemes including Hardwick, Mandale and North Shore. Endeavour Housing is the preferred RSL partner in the Hardwick scheme, alongside Barratt Homes and Keepmoat (formerly Haslam Homes). NomadE5 is the partner in the Mandale regeneration, again together with the developers Barratt Homes and Keepmoat.
- 4.36 The funding allocated also allows RSLs to develop a range of smaller schemes and specific schemes aimed at a particular community need, including those aimed at vulnerable people such as rented units and low cost home ownership units for those with learning disabilities, as will be developed as part of the 2008-11 round. £4m from Stockton's allocation in the 2006-08 round was dedicated to Extra Care facilities. As an integral part of the Hardwick development, Endeavour have developed the £6m Aspen Gardens Extra Care scheme which includes 30 apartments and 20 bungalows and opened in spring 2007. As well as the provision of care, facilities include a hobby room, IT facilities, lounges, and a bistro and beauty salon that are both open to the wider community. Parkside Court is located in Thornaby and is a smaller Extra Care scheme operated by Anchor Trust. It comprises 31 two-bed apartments and 17 two bedroom bungalows, and also has facilities in site that include a hairdressing salon. Parkside opened in 2005.

- **Issues facing developing RSLs and the impact of the 'credit crunch'**

- 4.37 The Committee found that there are a number of issues facing registered social landlords that are developers. The Housing Corporation has a commitment to achieving year on year efficiency targets, in order to maximise the number of homes provided per grant. The levels of grant funding are being reduced and at the same time RSLs need to make sure that the standards required are maintained. Environmental considerations are playing an increasing role and all homes funded as part of the 2008-11 investment programme need to make better use of energy, water and materials, and make better use of waste management.
- 4.38 The Housing Corporation is not currently asking for lower standards from builders, and ideally would prefer private developers to raise their standards to match those required for social housing. However, there was recognition that this could lead to the situation where in the current market, homes for low cost home ownership are not being completed due to the cost, whereas if they had been built for private sale, customers would not have had an issue with the quality of the home.

- 4.39 Grants were set at a level compared to the standards that are in place, and for a home that costs £100,000 to build, there would be approximately £45,000 in grant funding available, with RSLs making up the cost through borrowing. The Committee noted that RSLs have this capacity, and that some can borrow more than others, but also that RSLs can only borrow so much and a gap may open up. This is linked to the wider financial situation. The review took place against the background of a worsening economic situation with rising prices, and the tightening of requirements needed for a mortgage, including the need for higher deposits.
- 4.40 The Committee found that the credit crunch had the potential to have a detrimental effect on the deliverability of regeneration schemes, and especially the Low Cost Home Ownership elements. There was concern regarding the general slow down in the housing market, and the ability of developers to continue to progress with major schemes that included homes for private sale and shared ownership.
- 4.41 There was also the risk that the trend for ‘pepperpotting’ the types of tenure across a regeneration scheme could lead to a situation where a halt in construction of homes ‘for sale’ would then have an impact on the construction of those intended ‘for rent’.
- 4.42 The Committee found that, as of the date of the review, the major regeneration schemes are still pressing ahead. The Hardwick scheme has an agreed mechanism in place so that homes will be constructed in clusters of different types rather than on an individual basis. However, the Committee noted that some RSL Boards have had discussions regarding the viability of continuing onto new phases at the present time.
- 4.43 The Committee heard that client groups are struggling to find the money for deposits, and on the Mandale scheme for example, the shared ownership options were previously much more popular than at present. Therefore alongside the need to review future demand, there is the risk that when homes for LCHO have actually been completed, there is a risk that they will stand empty due to people being unable to raise the finance to complete moves into them. This could also stand in contrast to tenants living in sub-standard accommodation living in the same area whilst awaiting the completion of the regeneration schemes.
- 4.44 An alternative could be to switch homes intended for LCHO to homes for rent (either social or intermediate), however, regulations, at the time of the meeting held to discuss development, did not allow for the status of a home’s tenure to change should they not sell upon completion. The national targets are that two thirds of affordable housing should be for rent and one third should be for LCHO. The Government has now amended these in light of current market conditions and allowed some temporary flexibilities to be introduced. NomadE5, for example, have been allowed to switch some LCHO homes on specific schemes to intermediate rent. Intermediate rent is approximately 80% of what would be charged in the private sector.
- 4.45 The Committee was pleased to note that there was a commitment from the Housing Corporation and the RSLs to continue to look to find solutions to the issues. There is recognition that a range of tenure options may be more appropriate in order to provide more flexibility in the current climate. The Committee heard from the Housing Corporation representative that ‘rent to

buy' schemes may be an option, in that tenants take on homes initially on a rented basis, and then have the option to buy at a later date, using the rent already paid towards the cost of the home.

4.46 As well as the effect on the deliverability of schemes, the Committee recognise that keeping people in their current homes is of great importance. Endeavour have had initial discussions with Stockton Council to explore the potential of a 'Mortgage Rescue Package'; this would see Endeavour step in to take control of a mortgage either in whole or part. The Committee were made aware that during the course of the review the Government had announced a similar process; the Authority and Endeavour are awaiting further information on these proposals. The Committee found that in addition, Isos (the parent group of NomadE5) were examining flexibility within shared ownership options and 'reverse staircasing'. Shared ownership works on the principle of purchasers buying an initial share in a home, and often paying rent on the remainder. Over time the purchaser may buy additional shares ('staircasing') and may eventually 'staircase out', and own the whole home. As customers ability to pay for their share reduces, 'reverse staircasing' would allow such a person's share of ownership to go down, rather than stay static or increase. Enabling people to stay in their homes has clear benefits for both the customer and the RSL themselves.

4.47 It is recognised that as any rise in re-possession could have an impact on homelessness, the viability of new regeneration schemes and the sustainability of communities, the Committee strongly encourage such work and aim to keep updated with these new initiatives alongside encouraging Stockton Council's Housing Service to continue to work in partnership to investigate such schemes.

- **Increasing number of RSLs operating in the Borough**

4.48 The Committee found that the number of RSLs operating in the Borough continues to increase. This is mainly due to RSL-led investment and regeneration schemes (such as the introduction of NomadE5 to the Borough as part of the Mandale development), and stock transfer (the transfer of the sheltered housing to Erimus). Members of the Committee reported mixed feedback in relation to the views of tenants in their wards regarding the new schemes.

4.49 It is the case that the provision of affordable housing through planning obligations (or section 106 agreements) as part of private developments, will also normally lead to the involvement of a Registered Social Landlord to deliver this element. Planning obligations are negotiated between the Council as the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and the private developer as part of the planning application process for a particular development. It is Stockton Council's practice to request that 15% of new residential development is for affordable housing.⁴ An RSL is then selected to manage the affordable housing element, and the housing is either developed by the private developer and transferred, completed units are sold to an RSL, or the RSL receives free land to develop, depending on the agreement. Affordable housing has been secured in this way at sites including Billingham College, Fairview (Harper's Garden), and within the Bowesfield development.

⁴ Supplementary Planning Document 6: Planning Obligations, May 2008, SBC

4.50 Stockton Council at this time does not have any control over the selection of such RSL partners. The Housing Strategy team have researched the options in terms of a 'preferred partner list' for use in this selection process, which in theory would allow some element of control in terms of who operates in the Borough. However, it has been reported that such a list would not have a legal standing. Government guidance allows for the setting of standards expected from providers (including in terms of management and local presence) but that any rejection of a potential provider should be robustly justified.

4.51 The Committee believe that a wider framework approach is more appropriate. This would allow the Council to set out the standards required from RSLs before selecting them as key partners for future funding bids, at the same time as encouraging use of the framework when the selection of partners in s.106 agreements takes place. This will also clearly set out the standards expected at the beginning of the relationship between the Council and any RSLs new to the area.

- **S106 agreements**

4.52 In relation specifically to the affordable housing elements of s.106 agreements, the Committee found that the North East as a whole was behind the rest of the country when it came to maximising this method of housing provision. In 2006, 7.5% of major applications had s.106 agreements attached, compared to 40% in the South East. The Committee noted that although no issues have been reported in Stockton to date, in other areas RSLs have had concerns regarding the negotiation of the agreements, and it could become a future issue. The type of issues in relation to this include:

- Affordable housing may not be the only element sought within a obligation agreement, and so requests for highway improvements and sports facilities may have a claim on the same 'pot' of money;
- There can be a lack of in-depth understanding within local authorities regarding the finances involved in such deals, including land values, and that without knowledge of development economics it is difficult to counter developer claims that increasing the proportion of affordable housing would affect a site's viability, for example;
- RSLs have had experience of being presented with what might be seen as a 'done deal' following the planning application process that they cannot match in terms of standards or cost, and that this situation would be improved by involving RSLs at an earlier stage of the process;
- Private developers may prefer a tenure mix that would not be suitable for an RSL;
- S.106 agreements are subject to the time constraints, as with the 13-week target for consideration of major applications.

4.53 Both SBC Planning and the representatives from Endeavour and Isos believed that there was a case for raising awareness of the workings of s.106 negotiations. A report on best practice completed in 2004 on behalf of the South West Regional Board includes reference to the need to involve RSLs at an earlier stage in the process, develop relationships between private

developers/RSLs/LPAs, ensure clarity within LPAs as to how s.106 negotiations will be tackled, and ensure clarity for external stakeholders regarding LPA expectations.

- 4.54 The Committee believes it would be useful for further training to take place as appropriate in order to build and maintain officer knowledge regarding the implementation of these agreements.

Registered Social Landlords and their future strategic plans

- **Sector restructuring**

- 4.55 The Committee received evidence in relation to the future plans of key RSL partners operating in the Borough. In particular, evidence was received on this issue from Anchor Trust, Erimus Housing and North Star Group in order to provide a cross-section of views. There has been considerable restructuring within the housing association sector nationally, and this has taken place alongside the growth in the sector as a whole (from 475,000 dwellings in 1986 to 1,850,000 in 2006, mainly due to stock transfers). This has included the emergence of group structures, and this is where identifiable housing associations ally with one another in parent and registered subsidiary relationships. Group parent bodies may provide subsidiary RSLs with human resource, finance and development services.

- 4.56 The three main types of group have been identified as follows:

- Original groups – one stock owning group member linked with subsidiary organisations tasked with non-landlord functions eg construction;
- Mixed groups – a stock-holding housing association parent and one or more stock owning associations amongst the group subsidiaries;
- Umbrella parent groups – a non-asset owning parent agency with ultimate control over group subsidiaries including at least one stock-owning housing association.

- 4.57 Out of 150 group formations in 2007, 7 were of the original type, 89 are 'mixed', and 54 have umbrella parents. The 'umbrella groups' tend to be very large in terms of stock holdings; half of umbrella parent groups controlled more than 10,000 dwellings. More recent changes in the sector have seen an increase in group consolidation, as compared to group establishment. There is also a trend suggesting that all types of restructuring may be slowing (the failure rate of proposals has also been estimated as 30%).

- 4.58 The background to these changes includes the trend towards concentrating public funding for social housing towards a reducing number of recipient agencies. Some agglomerations have also taken place due to the need to 'rescue' associations with financial and governance problems. National research by the Housing Corporation⁵, shows that there are several main reasons as to why associations consider forming group structures, and these include having aspirations to:

⁵ *Sector Study 61: Sector Restructuring*, Centre for Research and Market Intelligence, Housing Corporation.

- Increase their scale of activity;
 - Spread corporate overheads across larger stock numbers;
 - Access specialist skills and services;
 - Increase influence;
 - Secure more favourable terms from suppliers and funders.
- 4.59 For those seeking to form a new group (as opposed to mergers, etc), financial efficiencies was seen as a key factor. It was anticipated that these would be achieved through group parent bodies providing corporate, development and financial services to all group members; this could bring tax advantages, reduced management costs, savings from office rationalisation, and IT savings.
- 4.60 Most changes require the approval of the Housing Corporation and it has set out criteria that applications would be considered against and these are: evidence of improved services to tenants and others; evidence of significant and measurable efficiency savings; arrangements to monitor outcomes against intended savings; and simple, clear and straightforward governance structures.
- 4.61 Within the Tees Valley, this pattern of re-structuring can be observed. From April 2008, Erimus has been part of Fabrick Housing Group alongside Tees Valley Housing. This is an 'umbrella' type of group, with Fabrick acting as the non-asset holding parent company providing strategic direction and corporate services to group members. Taking the group as a whole, it has a stock presence in fourteen local authority areas, with 85% providing for general needs, and the remainder being supported housing for the elderly and those with other specialist needs.
- 4.62 The Committee heard that the specific reasoning for Fabrick's formation was based around the close geographical 'fit' of both organisations, with both being based in Middlesbrough and stock concentrated in the Tees Valley area, and the opportunity to make efficiencies that could be re-invested into further regeneration schemes. Fabrick control the overall pattern of development, with future development within the Tees Valley to be undertaken by Erimus Housing, and development outside the sub-region to be undertaken by Tees Valley Housing (although specialist skills will be utilised where necessary).
- 4.63 North Star Housing Group was formed in July 2006 and comprises Endeavour and Teesdale housing associations. It is similar in structure to Fabrick, with corporate services including IT, finance and human resources residing at the parent company. Teesdale Housing Association was formed following the transfer of Teesdale District's housing, and membership of the group allows it to operate, as otherwise it would have been too small to be viable. The Group covers eleven local authority areas, with Endeavour's stock being concentrated in the urban Tees Valley, and Teesdale HA having a rural focus.
- 4.64 NomadE5 are similarly part of a group structure, as they are part of Isos Housing Group, together with Milecastle Housing and Castle Morpeth Housing Limited, both of which are stock transfer associations. The Group's

stock is now distributed across Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham, and now Teesside following NomadE5's involvement at Mandale.

- 4.65 North Star was taking the opportunity of a change in chief executive to review their direction and did not rule out future group expansion to include more housing associations should this suit the organisation's aims. Endeavour itself has met decent homes standard for some time and the immediate aim is to continue investment whether in stock or community development, with more new build coming on line. The association reported that it was close to building its 2000th property and that this was going to be as part of the Hardwick development. As an organisation they have been shortlisted for the Housing Corporation Community Development Award.
- 4.66 The Committee found that although the pattern of future development within Fabrick is determined by the parent company, any development that is currently committed to Erimus and Tees Valley will be seen through to completion. Erimus itself has a £30m development fund for new stock although the bulk of its spending will continue to be on improving its existing stock, alongside close working with local authorities.
- 4.67 It was stressed that at the local level, following the establishment of group structures, tenants should not notice a difference in terms of the organisation they deal with on a regular basis.

- **An ageing society**

- 4.68 As with other public sector organisations, RSLs need to assess the effects of an ageing population. Representatives from Erimus noted that currently many elderly residents are living in family accommodation, and that there is a need to increase the number of bungalow units. Anchor Trust concentrate on providing older people and sheltered housing schemes, and has 243 units within Stockton Borough. It recognises the aspirations and needs of the older members of the community and their increasing political and economic importance, together with recognition of its current stock which nationally contains too many bedsits, for example. Recently it has published 'Anchor2020' which sets out a vision of how the organisation will move forward to meet future challenges, and is part of a wide ranging consultation regarding the future role of the organisation. Therefore the organisation is not currently developing and is instead taking on board a wide range of views.
- 4.69 The Anchor2020 document sets out that the priorities for Anchor moving forward are likely to include:
- Maintaining high quality sheltered housing schemes which are available to rent or buy, whilst continuing to provide an integrated scheme manager service
 - Moving beyond sheltered housing towards developing 'living centres' which offer a range of sports, health and social facilities, alongside low to moderate level care services, with a flexibility of tenure on site;
 - Continuing to develop extra care schemes, but recognising the intensive capital and revenue costs involved, which Anchor believes will need reviewing;

- Developing services to enable older people to maintain their preference of staying at home for as long as possible, through providing associated services.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 It is clear from the evidence received during the review that Registered Social Landlords are playing an increasing role in providing, not only for the housing needs of the Borough, but also for its physical and social regeneration, supporting the wider vision for the Borough. In recognition of the significant role played by Housing Associations within the Borough, the Committee have made a series of recommendations in order to continue the good work and ensure that further improvements are made.
- 5.2 The Committee have found that the relationship between Stockton Council and locally operational RSLs is generally good at both the operational and strategic level. There are areas for improvement in terms of communication at the local level, especially with regard to the role of the ward councillor. Although recognising the capacity constraints placed upon the smaller RSLs due to their size, the Committee believe further encouragement is needed to ensure that RSLs play a full part in the role of Stockton Renaissance.
- 5.3 The implementation of the Tees Valley Sub-Regional Housing Corporation Protocol will ensure a joined up approach to many issues facing local authorities in their relationships with RSLs across the sub-region. In order to ensure that within Stockton Borough itself, the standards expected of RSLs are adhered to as far as is possible, the Committee is proposing a framework approach. This is to be used to inform the selection of partners for future funding bids, and the Council should also strongly encourage private developers to use the framework when selecting partners to deliver the affordable housing element of s106 sites.
- 5.4 As RSL involvement increase in the Borough, the Committee believe it is important for standards to be set in place, and for these to include issues such as the need for a local presence in their neighbourhoods. For those RSLs that are already present in the Borough and act mainly as landlords, the Committee is proposing an annual review process that will take into account the views of key stakeholders. The Committee has found several good examples of community investment schemes, and wish to encourage further good practice in this regard and also use this as criteria in the framework and review process, in order to ensure that RSLs play a major role in the communities in which they are based.
- 5.5 Both the framework and review process will add clarity to the Council's expectations and allow the Council to ensure that the contribution made by housing associations to the Borough's communities is maximised.
- 5.6 RSLs operating in Stockton continue to do well in terms of attracting grant funding to deliver planned affordable housing schemes, in partnership with the Council. In order to maximise the provision of affordable housing through all available methods, the Committee have identified that further developing expertise within the Council regarding the negotiation of planning obligations would be useful as this has the potential to become more important in the future.
- 5.7 The review took place against a background of a worsening financial and housing market situation. This has the potential to effect the deliverability of RSL-led housing regeneration programmes, and a detrimental effect on the ability of people to remain in their homes. With the development of shared

ownership products now comprising a substantial part of Housing Associations' tenure mix, and any increase in re-possession having the potential to impact upon housing need and homelessness, Registered Social Landlords have a key part to play in order to tackle the effects of the credit crunch. The Committee were pleased to see the development of initiatives to mitigate the effects of this and would encourage this further, in conjunction with the local authority. The housing market and its policy context remain dynamic and so Members have requested timely updates to be provided.

Appendix 1

Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Statistics RSLs with housing stock in Stockton-on-Tees Borough

Housing Stock

Source:

RSLs - Housing Corporation - Regulatory and Statistical Return Survey 2007

Tristar - Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2007

Registered Social Landlord	Property Type in Stockton-on-Tees	No. Local Authority areas operating in	No. Housing Corporation Green Lights [Out of 4 (Viable, Properly Governed, Properly Managed, Development)]	Total Stock	Total General Needs Stock	Total Older Persons and Sheltered Housing Stock	Total Stock
DATA LEVEL:				National	Stockton-on-Tees	Stockton-on-Tees	Stockton-on-Tees
Anchor	Majority Cat 1 & 2	254	3*	27,911	-	243	243
Accent	Some Cat 1 & 2	45	4	8,333	474	188	662
Endeavour/North Star	Some Cat 1 & 2	10	4	1,636	496	43	539
Erimus Housing	All Cat 1 & 2	2	4	10,955	-	147	147
Habinteg	Majority Cat 1 & 2	37	4	2,076	84	44	128
Hanover	Majority Cat 1	175	4	10,977	-	35	35
Home	Majority General Needs	224	4	81,230	56	52	108
Housing 21	All Cat 1 & 2	223	4	12,993	-	36	36
Nomad	Majority General Needs	19	4	418	62	-	62
Places for people	Majority General Needs	225	4	30,772	342	6	348
Railway Housing	All Cat 1 & 2	30	3*	1,346	4	48	52
Tees Valley Housing	Majority General Needs	11	4	2,997	952	44	996
TOTAL	-	-	-	191,644	2,470	886	3,356
TRISTAR HOMES LTD		1	Not Applicable	11,064	11,064	0	11,064

* Development green light not applicable to this RSL

Cat 1 - Properties linked to an alarm activated care service

Cat 2 - Properties with a resident warden

General Needs - Households without any support needs

Housing Stock Details

Source:

RSLs - Housing Corporation - Regulatory and Statistical Return Survey 2007

Tristar - Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2007

RSL	No. Shared Ownership Properties	No. Leaseholders	Average Rent (£)	Vacant Properties (%)	% Non-Decent Housing	Stock by number of beds in Stockton-on-Tees Borough						
						Non-self contained	Bedsit	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5+ Bed
DATA LEVEL:	National	National	Stockton-on-Tees	National	Stockton-on-Tees	Stockton-on-Tees						
Anchor	691	-	60.50	1.1	0%	0%	52%	28%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Accent	-	-	63.47	1.5	2.10%	0%	9%	36%	37%	15%	2%	0%
Endeavour/North Star	13	7	59.90	1.3	0%	2%	0%	15%	53%	25%	4%	0%
Erimus Housing	-	-	*	*	100%	0%	4%	85%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Habinteg	-	-	70.01	0.5	4.70%	0%	4%	22%	61%	13%	0%	0%
Hanover	217	3,675	76.40	0.0	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Home	653	-	65.68	1.5	0%	0%	0%	60%	31%	8%	0%	0%
Housing 21	54	-	82.69	0.9	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Nomad	145	198	49.15	0.7	0%	0%	0%	0%	45%	44%	10%	2%
Places for people	1,094	4,551	62.26	1.0	4.80%	1%	3%	11%	62%	19%	3%	0%
Railway Housing	73	-	52.16	0.2	0%	0%	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Tees Valley Housing	146	-	62.33	0.5	0%	0%	0%	29%	42%	27%	2%	0%
TOTAL/AVERAGE	3,086	8,431	61.75	0.8	5%	0%	6%	47%	32%	13%	2%	0%
TRISTAR HOMES LTD	0	278	55.85	2.2	23.76%	0%	0.5%	27%	30%	40%	2%	0.2%

* Information unavailable as Erimus HA did not own any Stock in the borough at 31 March 2007

Lettings Data

Source:

RSLs - CORE returns 2007

Tristar -CORE returns 2007 / Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2007

RSL	Lettings Made				Source of lets				
	First/ New lets	Re-lets	Total Lets	Total Lets	Total Lets as a proportion of stock	Internal Transfer	Direct	Nomination	Other
DATA LEVEL:	National			Stockton-on-Tees	Stockton-on-Tees	National			
Anchor	188	6,564	6,752	25	10%	14.1%	61.3%	5.6%	19.0%
Accent	52	1,311	1,363	112	17%	18.3%	62.3%	15.1%	4.3%
Endeavour/North Star	121	614	735	218	40%	11.2%	33.7%	49.7%	5.4%
Erimus Housing	5	773	778	*	*	23.5%	0.0%	76.3%	0.1%
Habinteg	6	107	113	14	11%	14.9%	50.0%	25.4%	9.7%
Hanover	-	18	18	6	17%	9.6%	47.1%	18.3%	25.0%
Home	637	3,102	3,739	16	15%	15.4%	32.9%	49.3%	2.4%
Housing 21	-	40	40	2	6%	30.8%	30.8%	30.8%	7.7%
Nomad	178	488	666	33	53%	5.2%	8.7%	63.5%	22.7%
Places for people	47	3,206	3,253	53	15%	12.4%	61.0%	20.9%	5.7%
Railway Housing	-	48	48	3	6%	8.6%	71.4%	20.0%	0.0%
Tees Valley Housing	175	314	489	147	15%	7.7%	37.1%	52.3%	2.9%
TOTAL/AVERAGE	1,409	16,585	17,994	629	19%	14%	41%	36%	9%
TRISTAR HOMES LTD	-	1,128	1,128	1,128	10%	16.6%	80.6%	-	2.8%

* Information unavailable as Erimus HA did not own any Stock in the borough at 31 March 2007

Customer Satisfaction

Source:

RSLs - Housing Corporation - Regulatory and Statistical Return Survey 2007

Tristar - Tristar Homes Website

RSL	Tenant Satisfaction			Year of Tenant Satisfaction Survey
	Overall Service (%)	Participation (%)	Repairs and Maintenance (%)	
DATA LEVEL:	National	National	National	-
Anchor	90	73	N/A	2006
Accent	74	50	63	2004
Endeavour/North Star	88	82	87.1	2006
Erimus Housing	80.3	77.1	81.3	2006
Habinteg	69.3	45.5	69.3	2004
Hanover	89.1	53.1	N/A	2004
Home	69	44	95.1	2004
Housing 21	87.6	54.3	80.1	2005
Nomad	91	81.5	86	2006
Places for people	76	56	69	2005
Railway Housing	89.8	64.3	92	2006
Tees Valley Housing	85.5	65.9	82.5	2006
AVERAGE	82.5	62.2	80.5	-
TRISTAR HOMES LTD	91	84	86	2007

Appendix 2

Tees Valley Sub-Regional Housing Corporation Protocol

Objective 1. Prevention of homelessness and access to housing options.		
Action	Target Date	Lead Responsibility
1) Produce a common sub – regional homelessness strategy statement around good practice.	October 2008.	Hartlepool Council Housing Corporation
2) Develop a common framework / form for the collection of data from RSLs.	June 2008.	Middlesbrough Council Housing Corporation
3) Develop a common sub – regional nominations agreement with Registered Social Landlords.	August 2008.	Darlington Council Housing Corporation
4) Review the current role and terms of reference of the sub – regional homelessness forum in order to deliver sub – regional strategies and priorities.	December 2008.	Middlesbrough Council
5) Each local authority to review and implement changes to their homelessness strategies in accordance with KLOE 8.	November 2008.	All Tees Valley local authorities.
6) Review Registered Social Landlords performance towards homelessness prevention and promote best practice.	January 2008.	Stockton Council Housing Corporation

7) Promote the use of and encourage uptake of Homebuy through the agent.	April 2008 onwards.	Housing Corporation.
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Objective 2. Introduction and implementation of a sub – regional Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme.		
Action	Target Date	Lead Responsibility
1) Encourage all new Registered Social Landlords commencing operation within the sub-region to be part of the CBL process.	April 2008 onwards.	Housing Corporation
2) Extend CBL to incorporate the private rented sector.	January 2009.	Redcar & Cleveland Council
3) Develop the CBL scheme to incorporate shared ownership and intermediate housing units.	February 2009.	Darlington Council Housing Corporation
4) Monitor the effectiveness of the sub – regional CBL scheme.	February 2009.	Darlington Council In liaison with the Chair of the sub-regional CBL initiative. Housing Corporation

Objective 3. Working in partnership to maintain balanced and sustainable communities.		
Action	Target Date	Lead Responsibility
1) Maximise the level of funding resource through SHIP 3 for the Tees Valley sub-region.	April 2008.	Tees Valley Living

2) Implement current Tees Valley Living (TVL) priorities for joint procurement.	August 2008.	Tees Valley Living
3) Explore new joint venture opportunities to improve delivery and to increase the level of private investment into housing.	October 2008.	Redcar & Cleveland Council Housing Corporation
4) Develop a consistent monitoring tool for the collation of RSL led HMR project information to feed into the work of Tees Valley Living	July 2008	Middlesbrough Council Tees Valley Living

Objective 4. Evaluate the delivery of new affordable housing and the management of existing affordable housing, through close engagement with RSLs, the Housing Corporation and other delivery partners.		
Action	Target Date	Lead Responsibility
1) Develop a common sub – regional pro-forma to capture RSL performance in the management of existing RSL housing stock.	January 2009.	Hartlepool Council Housing Corporation
2) Undertake bi-annual protocol review meetings between the H.C., RSL representatives and the Tees Valley L.A.s	August 2008 & February 2009.	Middlesbrough Council Housing Corporation
3) Review the data sharing collection protocols for the Tees Valley sub – region.	November 2008.	Redcar & Cleveland Council Housing Corporation

Objective 5. Increase the supply of affordable housing through PPS3.		
Action	Target Date	Lead Responsibility
1) Complete Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments/ surplus building assessments	August 2008.	Darlington Council
2) Seek to increase the supply of affordable housing and reduce public subsidy requirements.	August 2008	Darlington Council Housing Corporation
3) Develop a sub-regional empty homes initiative to maximise the use and accessibility of accommodation for local people in housing need.	March 2009.	Stockton Council
4) Ensure asset management strategies and processes reflect priorities for affordable housing.	January 2009.	All Tees Valley sub-regional partners and the Housing Corporation tbc
5) Support the Strategic Housing Market Assessment group and joint working on Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments.	April 2008 onwards.	All Tees Valley LAs.
6) Develop S.106 policies to maximise affordable housing in the sub-region and develop a common structure for s.106 agreements.	January 2009.	Darlington Council
7) Housing Corporation to share information with the Tees Valley L.A.s, developing RSLs, private developers and the Housing Corporation for the strategic re-allocation of NAHP funding where existing scheme approvals become undeliverable.	December 2008.	Middlesbrough Council Housing Corporation
8) Monitor affordable housing completions delivered across the sub – region through:	March 2009.	Redcar & Cleveland Council

<p>a) NAHP b) Planning Gain</p> <p>Against new sub – regional affordable housing targets.</p>		Housing Corporation
<p>9) Update sub – regional affordable housing targets in light of Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment findings.</p>	October 2008.	Stockton Council
<p>10) Develop an affordable housing register across the sub – region linked to CBL.</p>	November 2008.	Hartlepool Council

Objective 6. Aligning the provision of new Supported Housing to existing Supporting People strategies and resources.

Action	Target Date	Lead Responsibility
<p>1) Review existing and future supported housing requirements across the sub – region to identify vulnerable key target groups with Supporting people teams, the Housing Corporation and key delivery partners.</p>	October 2008.	Hartlepool Council Housing Corporation
<p>2) Share with RSL and private sector partners decommissioning and re- commissioning opportunities to improve access to investment funds.</p>	October 2008.	Stockton Council Housing Corporation

Objective 7. Working with RSLs, the police and other partners in promoting RESPECT.

Action	Target Date	Lead Responsibility
<p>1) Encourage all RSLs in the sub-region to sign up to the</p>	December 2008.	Stockton Council

RESPECT agenda.		Housing Corporation
2) Undertake an audit of existing examples of best practice nationally and assess their appropriateness for the sub – region.	January 2008.	Middlesbrough Council Housing Corporation
3) Encourage all RSLs to sign up to the RESPECT quality mark for housing management standards.	December 2008.	Stockton Council Housing Corporation

Objective 8. Working to promote and maintain decent communities / homes.		
Action	Target Date	Lead Responsibility
1) Ensure that Decent Homes standards are achieved in all social sector stock by 2010.	April 2008 onwards - quarterly updates.	Stockton Council Housing Corporation
2) Discuss with RSLs their improvement programme beyond 2010 including tackling obsolescence, difficult to let etc.	April 2008 onwards.	Hartlepool Council Housing Corporation

Objective 9. Working to promote community cohesion.		
Action	Target Date	Lead Responsibility
1) Work towards updating the sub-regional BME study.	March 2009.	Redcar & Cleveland Council Tees Valley Living

2) Ensure accessibility to all housing services for the B & ME community.	April 2008 onwards.	Darlington Council Housing Corporation
3) Ensure all future sub-regional strategies and documents are Equality Impact Assessed.	April 2008 onwards.	Middlesbrough Council
4) Consider the long term implication of asylum seekers and refugees on housing across the sub – region.	January 2009.	Hartlepool Council Housing Corporation

Objective 10. Community empowerment and participation		
Action	Target Date	Lead Responsibility
1) RSLs to engage with local communities when considering new developments in HMR areas.	Ongoing	Housing Corporation
2) Look to provide, in partnership with the private sector, on the job training for local residents where applicable.	April 2008 onwards.	Redcar & Cleveland Council Housing Corporation

Appendix 3 – Examples of resident involvement and influence on spending

RSL	Measuring tenant/leaseholder satisfaction and involvement in decisions (in addition to membership of the Board)
Home	3-year satisfaction survey, Customer Involvement Policy and Action Plan, Focus Groups, 'Question of the Day' Leaseholder Service Improvement Group, able to join other Service Improvement Groups if they wish.
NomadE5	<p>We use a combination of Vision Management Surveys to regularly test customer satisfaction. Additionally, we use residents from customer service group to mystery shop, work shadow, and survey customers to obtain information on customer experience. Surveys are carried out dependant on area of service monthly or quarterly.</p> <p>We have recently launched a Resident Involvement Strategy which was created in consultation with residents and an external consultant. The strategy provides numerous opportunities for residents to get involved in shaping and improving our services. We now have 14 specific themed or focused groups that meet to discuss specific services, development and policies within an area of the organisations business or they meet to discuss the residents' specific needs. An example of each is: we have a resident group that regularly meet with our maintenance services manager and they cover all topics within 'Asset Management' and we have a group specifically for younger residents and another group specifically for adults with learning difficulties. As well as regular meetings we host 'awareness sessions' for example we have recently had sessions (open invite to all) covering rent and service charges and another one on estate management issues.</p> <p>We have a Tenants Option Budget which is a pot of money for residents to suggest ways to improve the security or environment in their scheme. There is a panel of residents who make the decisions on approval and spend. In order to engage residents who may not be able to make meetings we have the Hot 100 which is a database of residents that receive consultative documents and surveys by post, fax, phone or email. We have also started to organise road shows – where we take company issues to local areas and then also take the local issues back to the office. Residents are also consulted through our newsletter and also surveys after they have had a repair done or another service from the organisation. We host an annual residents' conference/event in order to (amongst many reasons) celebrate our residents, to consult on targeted issues, to provide helpful workshops that benefit residents and also the company and to have a fun day.</p>
Endeavour	Endeavour surveys new tenancies, day to day repairs and gas servicing using the VMS software. Each survey is done quarterly. Each new tenant receives the New Tenancy survey while a sample of 300 day to day and 100 gas servicing are sent. This is now being expanded into surveying new developments, capital works and sheltered housing. We have also recently surveyed all of our tenants to enable us to profile their needs. We have introduced a raft of measures across supported housing to ensure vulnerable

	<p>tenants are also involved.</p> <p>We provide a range of involvement mechanisms that are flexible enough to allow our tenants to be involved in influencing decisions at a level and pace that suits them. This includes: tenant representation on the Board; [the] surveys; mystery shopping; newsletter editorial panel; focus groups; annual conference; estate walkabouts; resident groups/associations. We also have a Tenants Advisory Panel (TAP) who are the organisation's main tenant consultative body. Membership of TAP is open to all tenants of the association.</p>
Anchor	<p>Annual Tenant Option survey - postal questionnaires.</p> <p>Local tenant/resident forums - each have special (business) topics as portfolio and work with Management on improving the services. Anchor 500 and Guardian 100 customer participation panels (over 600 tenants) are involved informally in providing their views and opinions on a range of services we provided (regular surveys, focus groups, telephone surveys via this customer panel).</p>
Places for People	<p>We collect feedback in a number of ways, new tenant surveys, reception surveys, reception surveys, participation events.</p> <p>Each area has an area customer liaison panel who contribute to decision making across all aspects of the business.</p>
Habinteg	<p>STATUS tenant survey conducted every 3 years. Satisfaction surveys sent out with all repair orders. Annual scheme meetings for tenants to question officers. Ad hoc surveys done on individual schemes.</p> <p>All schemes elect tenant representatives to ensure that tenants voices are heard at a local level. All reps attend national and regional conferences to debate issues affecting the organisation. Tenants sit on all policy and procedure reviews. Tenant inspectors inspect services and make recommendations for improvements. Tenants sit on all interview panels.</p>
Erimus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Membership - This is a demonstrable commitment to ensuring that tenants' views are at the heart of decision making in shaping services and in determining the future direction of the organisation. • Tenant Regulators – Erimus is the first RSL to have introduced resident regulators. tenants (including leaseholders) have a formal, influential role to assess and influence the performance, service delivery, plans and behaviour of Erimus Housing. They have a direct link to the Board and corporate management team. Tenant regulators also participate in Thematic Best Value Reviews. • Service Standards - We have developed a suite of customer service standards in consultation with residents. These standards

	<p>are underpinned by a specific survey designed to measure the customer’s experience from reporting a problem to the issue being dealt with.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mystery Shopping – we have a panel of mystery shoppers who test service delivery and make recommendations based on findings. • Estate Walkabouts – these are publicised and residents are encouraged to participate and discuss issues important to them. • Annual Tenants survey [and annual leaseholder survey] – findings are fed into strategic planning process, [and service specific satisfaction surveys eg. ASB, repairs] • You Said We Did events – these are part of the strategic planning process and take place twice yearly. Residents can raise issues that they wish Erimus to address over the coming year. • Area Forum – these take place monthly in each of the geographic locations and deal with issues affecting residents within that area. Following the successful SSVT a fifth forum was set up to represent Stockton residents. • Residents Panel – a key decision making team within Erimus who also have editorial responsibility for the residents’ newsletter. • Focus groups – numerous including: Repairs and Maintenance – revised the timescales for responsive repairs. Investment – involved in selecting suppliers and contractors and developing programme of works. Rent and Income – recently reviewed the whole process with all members now based in one team. • Young Persons group – meet to consider impact of activities on young people • BME group - meet to consider impact of activities on young people • Erimus Residents Disability Action Group – they also look at policies to ensure no adverse impact on those with disabilities. • Annual Tenant conference – this is organised and run by residents with opportunities to feed into decision making process. A progress report is usually given by Directors and a topic for consultation e.g Respect Agenda.
Tees Valley	<p>Survey (Respect), Telephone Satisfaction Surveys: Allocations, Reporting of ASB, Reporting a repair, Logging a complaint, Planned maintenance works. Development Survey (9 months), Status Survey, In person - reception survey, Comments/compliments handout in sign up pack.</p> <p>Leasehold Advisory Panel - advise on service delivery to our leaseholders. Tenant Board Members. Housing Advisory Panel.</p>
<p>Tenant opportunities to directly influence area based budgets</p>	
NomadE5	<p>As mentioned we have the Tenants Option Budget, where local residents/neighbours can apply for funding for items or projects to improve their local environment or/and improve security.</p> <p>Service charges can be described as area based budgets as a charge will vary from scheme to scheme due to the different services required or desired by residents. Housing Officers consult with the residents regarding services provided. Residents will also be directly involved in the recruitment and monitoring of contractors. A group of residents are booked on some training to equip</p>

	them with the skills and knowledge in order to work alongside our procurement manager in reviewing the contractors used, thus influencing the spend in local areas.
Endeavour	We have 3 housing co-operatives, one in Middlesbrough and the other in Norton Grange. The Norton Grange co-op has an elected Board of 12 tenants and the Board oversees the quarterly management allowance that is paid to them by Endeavour. The TAP also oversee their own budget. They provide grants to community groups/projects etc.
Anchor	Scheme Planning meetings.
Places for People	We currently have customer scrutiny of our planned maintenance programme, in addition our customer panel control our tenant participation budget.
Habinteg	All schemes have a tenant led improvement budget that can be used to provide additional services.
Erimus	Area housing forums are given £25,000 p.a. each which is used to make a difference to the quality of life for residents across Middlesbrough. Examples of schemes where the money has been used includes provision of CCTV in Grove Hill; spiked fencing in Berwick Hills and hanging baskets at Ashdale bungalows. Stockton Area Housing Forum has its own budget of £1,000 for specific projects this included patio furniture, prints for corridors and crockery for meeting rooms.
Tees Valley	Involvement in the Housing Advisory Panel who have been involved with major repair budgets, priorities and its allocation. Estate Improvement Panel made up of tenants who look to prioritise, authorise and allocate funds from £30k estate improvements budget to bids for estate enhancements right across the stock. The 2 Tenant Board members agree the amount in each budget and any annual increases across the organisation in line with business plan priorities. Our Chair of our Housing Advisory Panel is a member of North East Procurement representing Tees Valley Housing.