



**Tenant Involvement Strategy  
Housing Services  
Redditch Borough Council 2009-2012**



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## Foreword

This Strategy for Tenant Involvement has been commissioned by Redditch Borough Council's Housing, Leisure and Customer Services Directorate, to respond to the shift in public policy ensuring greater opportunities for tenants to be involved in shaping service delivery and in decision making.

Our approach is based on the principles of the Government white paper Strong and Prosperous Communities and the Housing and Regeneration Bill. Tenant Involvement is considered to be a central element of good service delivery.

Redditch Borough Council Housing Services are committed to ensuring their tenants get the opportunity to be involved in how services are delivered day to day and will strive to embed this strategy throughout all services that they provide.

Redditch Borough Council officers are working with their tenants to develop this strategy and action plan. Officers have carried out a self assessment against the Audit Commissions Key Lines of Enquiry to analysis current service delivery against an excellent service delivery standard which Housing Services are striving to achieve.

Housing services recognise that their communities are diverse and want to be able to offer a range of opportunities for tenants to get involved at a level that suits them and their lifestyles; we will aim to break down barriers that stop tenants from getting involved or accessing services.

Community Engagement is key to how Redditch Borough Council communicate and consults with its residents. This strategy strongly contributes to one of the Council priorities a well Managed organisation and will help us to achieve greater opportunities for community engagement.

**Brandon Clayton**  
**Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and the Environment**



## Tenant Involvement Vision

Redditch Borough Council's Tenant Involvement vision as written by our tenants ***“to be interested in what tenants want, caring about what people think and being committed to work together to shape and improve Services for Redditch Borough Council tenants”***

This vision contributes to the Housing and Community Services statement of purpose ***“To provide a 3 star service that gives a consistent high quality service that provides value for money and meets the customer's expectations”***

We know that to achieve this we need to empower and support our tenants to enable them to control their lives and involve them in everything that we do including the decisions that we make and the plans we put in place to develop and improve services.

Tenant Involvement benefits all involved; the individual; the community and the Council. We aim to reach out to tenants allowing and encouraging involvement in a variety of ways and ensuring that meaningful and constructive changes and feedback are provided.



## Introduction

Redditch Borough Council Housing Services provide landlord services to Redditch Borough Council's tenants.

In September 2009 a Tenant Involvement Focus group was set up comprising of housing officers and tenants. Redditch Borough Council believes that in order to reach our aims and objectives our Strategy to involve tenants must be designed and written with tenants.

To help us develop this strategy we have also used best practice and met with other organisations that are currently successfully achieving their aims.

This strategy has taken into account the feedback from the latest national status surveys results 2009, where it highlighted that satisfaction levels for keeping tenants informed and taking account of tenants views has fallen since 2006.

Redditch Borough Council Housing Services are committed in continuously developing and improving the current structure and mechanisms which are in place and will bring about real changes in the services tenants receive.

The strategy for the next 3 years has been developed to set out clearly where we are now, where we want to be and the steps we are going to take in order to reach our goal which is to give every tenant the opportunity to be involved at a level which suits their needs and lifestyles.

The Strategy also supports the Governments commitment in ensuring that citizens and communities are effectively empowered to influence public policies and services as set out in the Government white paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" and demonstrates our commitment and ability to develop the range and extent of ways Redditch Borough Council tenants can become involved in planning and monitoring service delivery.

The Tenant Services Authority, is the new regulator for affordable housing, they believe housing matters, and that access to good quality housing improves lives. Their goal is to raise the standard of services for tenants.

The National Tenants Voice is an independent body the government has set up to enable social housing tenants to influence key national policy areas. Part of the structure which is currently in development will be a National Tenant Council of tenants which will meet 4 times a year to debate key national issues.

We will aim to encourage our tenants to be actively involved in the National Tenants Voice whether they become part of the National Council of Tenants or undertake consultation. We want to ensure that Redditch Borough Council tenants have their say in how services for them nationally as well as locally continue to improve.



## Background

### Setting the scene

Tenant Participation has been themed throughout housing services since the mid 1990's in the formation of tenant groups. In 1995 Redditch Borough Council launched the Borough Tenants Panel which was set up to be the umbrella group over all local groups. Panel members consist of representatives from local groups which enable information to be filtered back. Local Councillors are co-opted onto the panel and Tenant Participation Officers provide support.

In April 2000 a Tenant Compact was introduced and by 2002 Tenant members doubled.

During 2004 Redditch Borough Council carried out a Stock Options Appraisal, tenant participation increased during this process and the Borough Tenants Panel members were involved in interviewing the independent tenant advisor to carry out the appraisal. Surveys, open days, face to face meetings took place which assisted in the development of a database of people expressing an interest in participating.

The Options appraisal concluded that Redditch Borough Council continued to provide landlord services and involvement has remained stable.

In 2008 the Head of Housing and Community Services reviewed housing services looking at areas for improvement. It was recognised that the implementation of the Housing and Regeneration Bill emphasised that Tenant participation needed to become more embedded in the day to day tenancy management services. Taking this into consideration the Management structure was revised and teams were developed to focus on improving housing services by involving tenants.

The Tenant Involvement Strategy focus group was set up in September 2009 made up of tenants and RBC officers. At the first meeting it was decided to change the name from Tenant Participation to Tenant Involvement as it was felt by our tenants that the next stage for Redditch Borough Council was to encourage involvement not just participation.



Tenant Involvement Focus Group



Tenant Involvement Community Event

## What are our Aims and Objectives?

### Aims:

- To provide a wide range of involvement methods and ensure tenants are at the heart of everything we do
- Understand the profile of our tenants and respond to their needs
- Embed tenant involvement throughout Housing Services and the rest of the organisation to achieve a tenant involvement culture
- Ensure we deliver quality services that are value for money.

### Objectives:

We will consult in a variety of ways on any significant change in the way that Housing Services are delivered.

We will ensure that our staff are trained to encourage and involve tenants.

We will provide training for tenants to develop them in a variety of skills to empower them to be involved in higher level decision making.

We will encourage our tenants to access training and develop their own skills to improve their tenant involvement opportunities and their own lives.

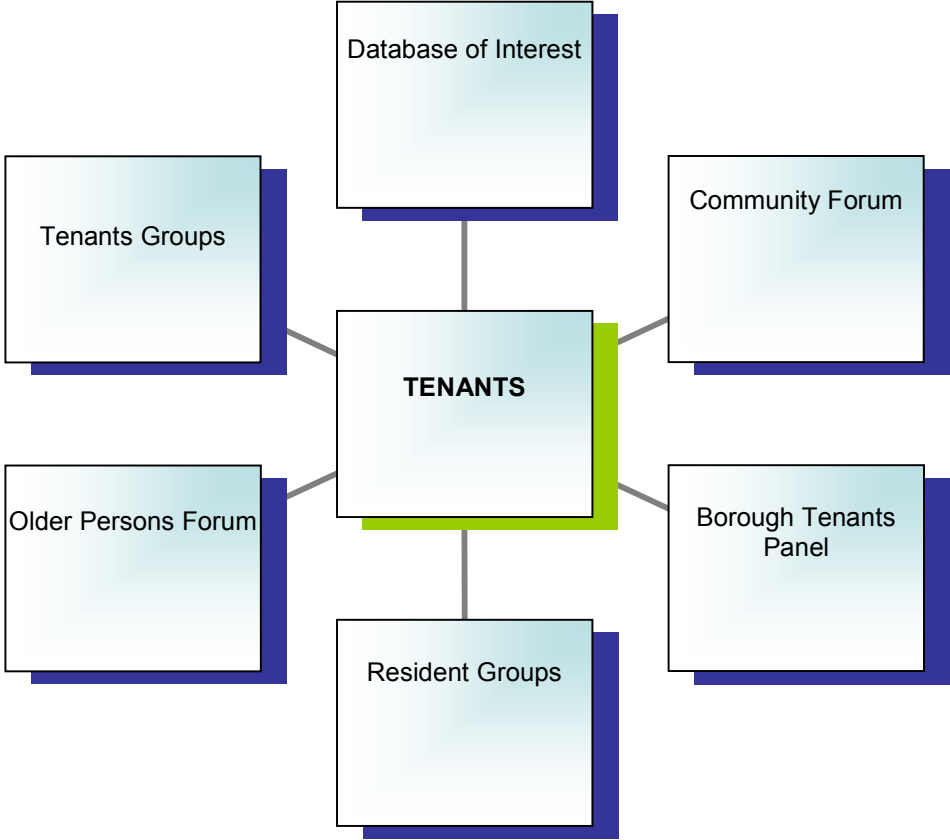
We will continuously review our aims and objectives with our tenants and staff.

### We will ensure our customers are involved in:

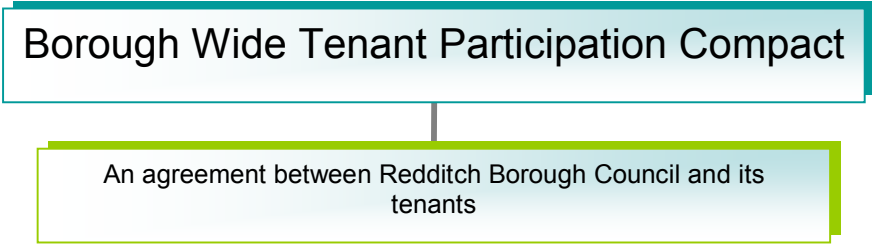
- Developing strategies and plans
- Developing policies, procedures
- Reviewing and introducing new service standards
- Estate enhancement projects
- Monitoring of performance of staff and tenants
- Involved in the interview process for certain jobs within Housing Services
- Helping to organise events held by Tenant Involvement Officers
- The design and clarity of newsletters and produced information
- to continuously feedback information and responses to tenant involvement by you said - we did



# Existing Tenant Participation Methods



# Existing Tenant Agreements





## **Existing Tenant Participation Methods**

### **Borough Tenants Panel**

A panel made up of representatives from local tenants groups across the Borough, elected Members and Tenant Involvement Officers.

### **Tenants Groups**

A constituted group of tenants who focus on issues in their local area.

### **Older Persons Forum**

A special interest group set up to provide views on aspects that specifically affect older people. For example: the Older Persons Strategy.

### **Resident Groups**

An informal group of local residents who focus on their own specific estate or scheme.

### **Community Forum**

A diverse group of residents and tenant representatives who are consulted with for all council related issues and promote all aspects of community services that are available within the borough.

### **Database of Interest**

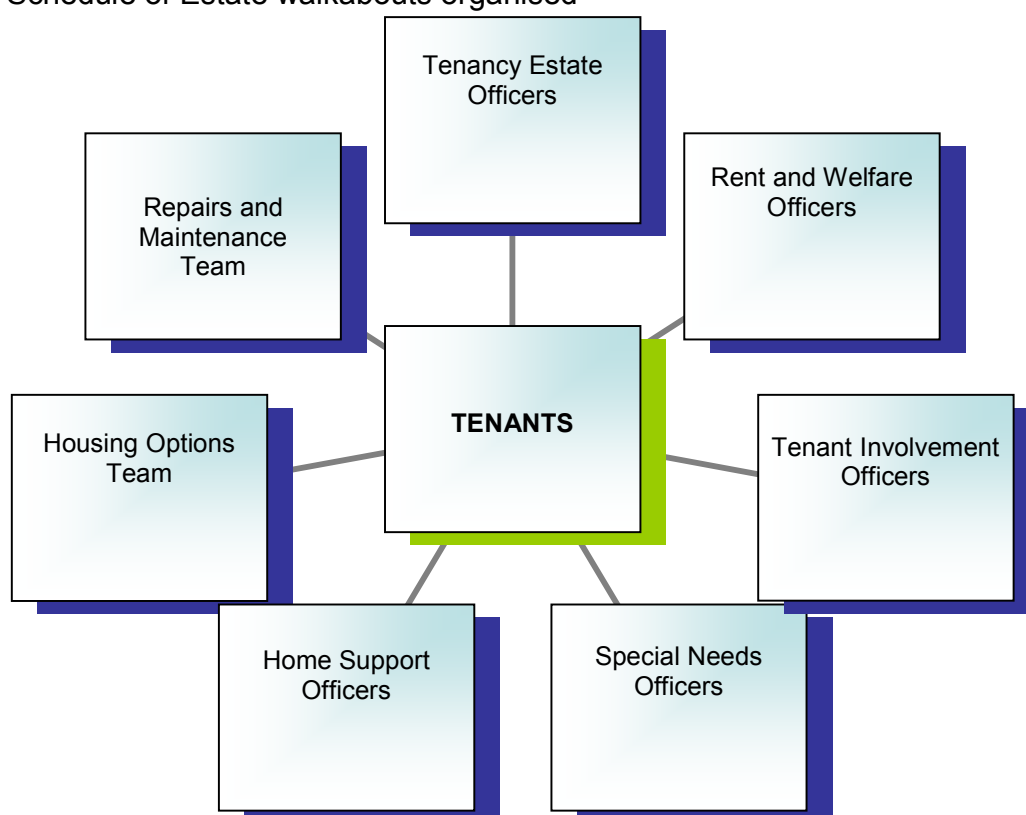
A list of tenants who can be contacted by email, text, telephone, post to give their views on a specific service or receive information regarding RBC. This group of people tell us which topics they are specifically interested in and many become involved in special interest groups, surveys or events.



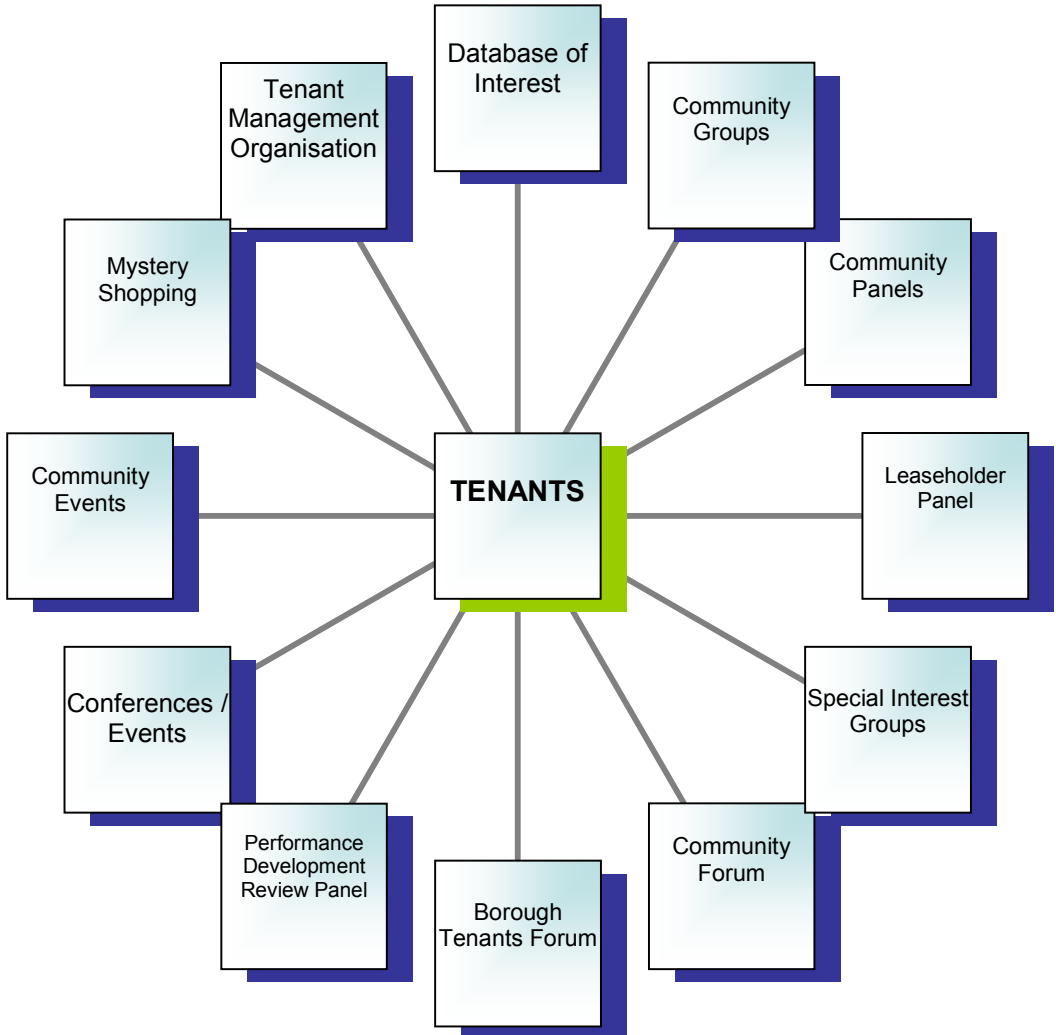
## Where we are now:

We recognise we already have arrangements to enable tenants to participate in the development of housing services, however, we believe to achieve our aims and improve our services we must implement and embed a tenant involvement strategy and action plan.

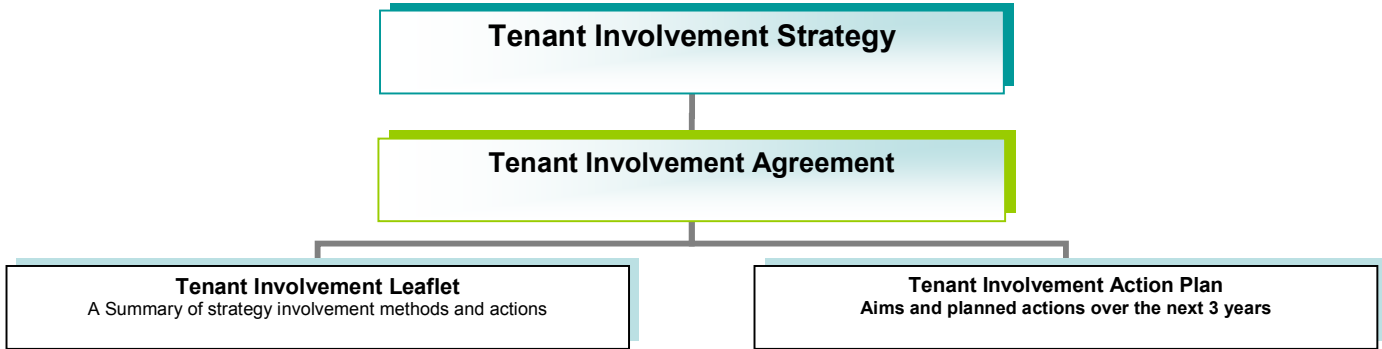
- New Housing Structure implemented during early 2009
- Existing groups meet on a regular basis
- Borough Tenants Panel meet monthly
- Tenant Involvement Officers working with informal groups to become constituted
- All tenants on the original database of interest contacted
- List of group and tenant members currently involved created
- Schedule of Estate walkabouts organised



### Future Tenant Involvement Methods



### Future Tenant Involvement Agreements



## Future Tenant Involvement Methods

### Tenants

**A Tenant is anyone who rents a property from Redditch Borough Council Housing Services. It is vital that Redditch Borough Council Tenants are at the heart of everything we do, the decisions that we make and the plans that we put in place for improving services**

### Database of Interest

A list of tenants who can be contacted by email, text, telephone, post to give their views on a specific service or receive information regarding RBC. This group of people tell us which topics they are specifically interested in and many become involved in special interest groups, surveys or events.

### Community Groups:

An informal group of local residents who focus on their own specific estate or scheme.

### Community Panels:

A formal group of local residents that focus on their own estate, schemes. Estate Tenancy Officers will work with them on estate management issues.

### Leaseholder Panel:

A borough wide panel who deal with issues which specifically affect leaseholders.

### Special Interest Groups:

Tenants and leaseholders from groups, panels and the database of interest coming together to discuss and consult on particular topics. i.e. Older Persons Strategy.

### Community Forum:

A diverse group of residents and tenant representatives who are consulted on for any council related issues (not just housing) and promote all aspects of community services that are available within the borough.

### Borough Tenants Forum:

An umbrella group consisting of representatives from all groups including local Councillors. The Group will focus on strategic aims of involvement and will be consulted on council documents such as policies and procedures where key decisions will be reached. All group activities will be fed back at these meetings.



## **Future Tenant Involvement Methods**

### **Performance Development Review Panel**

A panel of members from all groups including Officers and Councillors to review develop and monitor involvement. The panel will also be responsible for monitoring performance and setting local targets for day to day management and be involved in mystery shopping exercises and inspections.

### **Conferences/Events**

An annual event inviting all tenants and leaseholders. To promote tenants involvement and carry out consultation on topics such as service standards.

### **Community Events**

Events carried out at a local level to promote tenant involvement or fun days to bring communities together. These events will be encouraged and supported by Tenant Involvement Officers.

### **Mystery Shopping Exercises**

A mystery shopper is someone who uses our services and tells us what can be improved. This could involve visiting or telephoning services area's. This helps RBC to develop and improve service standards.

### **Tenant Management Organisations**

A Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) is a means by which council tenants can collectively take on responsibility for managing their homes.

The resident members of the TMO create an independent legal body and usually elect a tenant-led management committee to run the organisation. The TMO can then enter into a legal management agreement (contract) with the landlord. The TMO is paid annual management and maintenance allowances in order to carry out the management duties that are delegated to them.

The services managed by the TMO vary with local circumstances but may include day-to-day repairs, allocations and lettings, tenancy management, cleaning and caretaking.



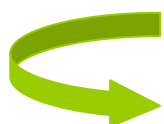
## What we are aiming to do and how? Action planning Summary:

We recognise to achieve our aims and objectives in this Strategy that we have a lot of ground to cover and by examining the Key Lines of Enquiry Framework have identified our gaps and devised the following actions along with how we are planning to take them forward.



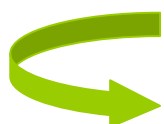
**Action:** Implement the Tenant Involvement Strategy, Action plan and new involvement structure.

**How:** present the draft Strategy to Tenant Groups, Community Forum and Elected Members for approval



**Action:** Collect views on how tenants want to be involved

**How:** A survey sent to all tenants asking them how they would like to be involved. Encourage responses by offering incentives.



**Action:** Establish an in- depth customer profile

**How:** Officers using existing information to establish a tenant profile database



**Action:** Encourage involvement from a more diverse range of tenants

**How:** Be committed to engage with traditionally hard to reach groups and work closely with the Community Forum



## What we are aiming to do and how?



**Action:** Create a Tenant Involvement culture in Housing Services

**How:** Provide training and support for staff, tenants, elected members and groups.



**Action:** Recognise and overcome barriers for tenants becoming involved

**How:** Analyse potential barriers and provide transport, access, child care and translation services



**Action:** Increase the number of tenants involved in the tenant involvement structure

**How:** Create a website specifically for involvement, offer a wide range of involvement methods and carry out promotion events



**Action:** Understand our gaps in service delivery and how to continuously develop and improve

**How:** Benchmark with other social housing providers, research best practice, attend seminars and use KLOE framework



**Action:** Achieve service standards and targets set internally or by Local Area agreements

**How:** Work with Tenants to set service standards and the Redditch Partnership to achieve local area agreement targets

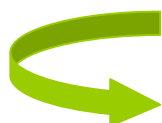


## What we are aiming to do and how?



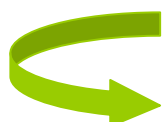
**Action:** Involve tenants in improving and shaping services

**How:** Create specialist forums to focus on specific issues, policies and procedures



**Action:** Involve tenants in deciding on estate enhancement project work

**How:** Carry out Estate walkabouts with RBC officers, tenants, leaseholders and elected members to collect views



**Action:** Introduce new Tenant Agreements in direct consultation with tenants

**How:** Set up a Special interest group to review the existing Borough Wide compact and implement new agreements





## Equality and Diversity

Redditch Borough Council is committed to providing information and services, equally without discrimination to meet the needs of the community it serves. We will develop a profile of our tenants in order to ensure that the opportunities for involvement match our tenant's needs.

We understand and respect the diverse range of qualities which characterise our tenants which include race, religion, culture, nationality, ethnic background, colour, disability, sex, sexuality, age literacy and income levels.

The Tenant Involvement Strategy recognises the differing needs of our tenants in particular those groups that RBC find hard to engage with such as young people, people with disabilities and tenants in full time employment. As part of our action plan a menu of options will be developed for such groups to help overcome barriers for their effective involvement. In addition RBC will also offer the following to overcome such barriers:

- Transport to and from meetings
- Mileage allowance using their own transport
- Various times and venues for meetings
- Translation services
- Venues with disability access arrangements
- Help with child care costs
- Help with carer costs
- Offer incentives
- Design events of interest
- Provide training and support



## Resources to Support Tenant Involvement

- The Housing Team Structure focuses on Tenant Involvement throughout tenancy management services.
- Staff and tenants attend seminars, training events
- Benchmarking with other social housing providers sharing best practice
- Budget to support and promote tenant involvement
- Methods of involvement information and production of information leaflets
- Tenancy and Tenant Involvement officer visits to promote tenant Involvement
- Housing Services Estate inspections with Officers, Tenants, Leaseholders and elected members
- Involvement agreements and compact
- Housing Service Action plans including Housing Options trailblazer
- Database and Performance monitoring
- Housing Services accredited Charter Mark Award standard



Housing Service Team winning Charter Mark Award

## Reviewing the Tenant Involvement Strategy

The Strategy will be subject to continuous monitoring and review to ensure that staff and tenants are meeting the aims within the Strategy and action plans.

The role of the Performance/Development review panel will be to monitor the progress of actions. The Housing Services Manager/Team Leader and an elected representative from Borough Tenants forum will conduct quarterly meetings. The panel will be responsible for ensuring that the appropriate resources are made available to deliver actions and to deal with issues or disputes.

Tenant Involvement Officers will be responsible for ensuring that timely consultation of satisfaction is carried out which will also be reported to and monitored by the Performance/Development Review panel.

Performance and outcomes will be published on the Tenant Involvement website and other publications such as Redditch Matters.

Real outcomes will be established out in the estates on walkabouts, satisfaction levels with Tenant involvement services improving in annual status surveys and external body inspections such as the Tenant Services Authority and mystery shopping exercises which will help us to improve our rating to achieve a **3 star service**.

## Reviewing the existing Borough Wide Tenant Compact

The existing Borough Wide compact agreed in June 2006 is in need of modernisation and a review will take place upon implementation of this strategy. The New Tenant Agreements will be drawn up with the tenants. A Special Interest Group will be established made up from volunteers from the database of interest, existing constituted groups and member of the Community Forum and Borough Tenants Forum.

