

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE**

### **REVIEW OF THE TENANT PARTICIPATION ADVISORY SERVICE CYMRU**

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper invites Committee to consider:

- the report, 'Review of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Cymru', completed in April 2002 (see the Report's Executive Summary at Appendix 1);
- TPAS Cymru's response to the Report (at Appendix 2); and
- suggested advice (at paragraphs 13 – 14 of this paper) and next steps (at paragraphs 15 - 20).

#### **Recommendation**

2. That the Committee considers this paper and submits views to the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities.

#### **Timing**

3. Subject to consideration of Committee's views on this paper, Housing Directorate officials begin work with TPAS on implementing the Review's recommendations later this month.

#### **Background**

##### **TPAS Cymru**

4. TPAS Cymru is a non-profit making organisation established to promote tenant participation in local authority and registered social landlord housing. The organisation provides advice, information and training programmes designed to empower tenants in the management of their homes and estates. It plays a key role in developing partnerships between local authority and housing association landlords and their tenants.

5. TPAS Cymru is entirely reliant on the Assembly Government for its core funding and also receives project funding (under the Social Housing Management Grant Programme). Details of previous and

planned funding from the Assembly Government is as follows:

	<b>Core funding (£)</b>	<b>Project funding (£)</b>	<b>TOTAL (£)</b>
<b>2001-02</b>	238,492	32,213*	270,705
<b>2002-03</b>	244,454	35,000~	279,454

\* this funding was allocated as follows:

- o £20,637 for Best Value training for tenants;
- o £6,020 to support tenant participation conferences; and
- o £5,558 to support a tenants stock transfer seminar.

~ this £35k is being allocated towards two projects: the first to develop a good practice guide on "Mystery Shopping" as a technique for testing and improving service quality. The second will be to undertake a survey on levels of access to new communication media by tenants and tenants groups, and how this affects the way that landlords communicate with their tenants (the project output will be a best practice guide for tenants and landlords).

6. In addition, the Assembly Government is currently considering 3 further applications from TPAS for Social Housing Management Grant project funding.

#### Other Assembly Government support for Tenant Participation and Training

7. In addition to funding TPAS, in 2002-03 the Assembly Government will be supporting tenant participation in Wales through the following: core funding of the Welsh Tenants Federation; a Tenant Empowerment Grant Programme for Wales; bursary funding for tenants to attend courses at the National Tenants Resource Centre; and 6 local tenant participation projects. Three further local tenant participation bids, for 2002-03 Social Housing Management Grant funding, are currently being assessed.

#### Purpose and method of the Review of TPAS

8. TPAS Cymru has received Welsh Office / Assembly Government funding since its inception in 1988 but has never been subject to a thorough review of its business and administration procedures, although meetings are held with the Housing Directorate to monitor expenditure of TPAS' Social Housing Management Grant. The Review was designed to help the organisation use the Assembly Government's core funding as cost effectively and efficiently as possible. Further, there is a requirement that all core-funded organisations should be reviewed at least every five years.

9. HACAS Chapman Hendy carried out the Review for the Housing Directorate. The work was

commissioned as part of the National Assembly's 2001-02 Housing Research Programme and was out-sourced as there was neither the expertise nor the capacity within the Housing Directorate to do the work.

10. The review brief is at Appendix 3. In carrying out the work, HACAS Chapman Hendy sought information and views from TPAS members and staff, Housing Directorate staff, local authorities, registered social landlords, supported housing organisations, and tenants' associations and federations.

## **Conclusions of the Review**

11. The general conclusions reached by HACAS Chapman Hendy are positive:

*"TPAS has a valuable role to play in continuing the development of Welsh policy and practice in tenant participation."*

*"It has attracted and maintained membership support from the majority of Welsh councils, registered social landlords and tenants groups".*

*"TPAS is held in high regard in its role of being a source of information and advice, and in promoting equal opportunity for tenants".*

*"It is widely thought to be a democratic organisation and able to perform well in its role of influencing Assembly Government policy"*

*"Users ranked highly the services to develop tenant participation, tenants compacts, support tenant groups and training."*

*"TPAS are committed and hard working, putting in many hours of their own time in support of the organisation."*

*"The Director, with the full support of the Management Committee, is improving policies and procedures."*

12. However, the Report identifies clear issues that need to be addressed and areas where there is scope for development and improvement.

## **Review Recommendations**

13. The Report contains a list of recommendations for both the Assembly Government and TPAS. The following table sets out the recommendations for the Assembly and advice is offered on whether or not they should be implemented. This advice takes account of TPAS' response to the Review Report.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Advice</b>
1	Need to identify the outputs to be core funded by the Assembly Government.	Accept. To implement, in conjunction with TPAS, by March 2003.
2	Should provide TPAS Cymru with guidance and advice on relevant monitoring and evaluation systems.	Accept. Guidance and advice to be provided by Autumn 2002.
3	Should use an appropriate ROAME (Rationale, Objectives, Appraisal, Monitoring and Evaluation) statement to inform its annual funding letter to TPAS Cymru.	Accept. A ROAME statement to be prepared for the 2003-04 core funding letter.
4	Could usefully undertake research into the general issue of benefits of tenant participation in Wales with a view to further clarifying the role of TPAS Cymru.	<p>Accept. It would be beneficial to review the evidence on the benefits of tenant participation in Wales and the UK, with a view to highlighting possible areas for the development of TPAS' activities. A desk-based review of research evidence (i.e. a literature review) could commence in Autumn 2002 with TPAS given the opportunity to advise on the scope of the review.</p> <p>The outcome of the review will be considered to ascertain whether there is a need for new research.</p>
5	Should examine and improve channels of communication between itself and TPAS Cymru.	<p>Accept, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● starting a cycle of quarterly meetings between Housing Directorate officials and TPAS Cymru (from June 2002); and</li> <li>● nominating a Housing Directorate official as the Assembly Government "main contact" for TPAS.</li> </ul>
	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Advice</b>
6	Might second an officer to TPAS Cymru for a three-month period to obtain a more profound understanding of the environment in which TPAS Cymru operates.	Assembly Government Director of Housing and TPAS Director to explore this recommendation.

7	Should specify in its grant letter the main areas of activity that its core funding is supporting.	This has already been implemented with the 2002-03 core funding grant offer letter.
8	Should clearly lay out the terms and conditions attached to its grant funding.	Accept. The 2003-04 grant offer letter will clearly state the outputs and outcomes to be achieved from Assembly Government funding. (This will be alongside the set of generic terms and conditions that broadly apply to all grants allocated under the Social Housing Management Grant Programme).
9	Should commission a further review of TPAS Cymru in 12-18 months to test the consequences of implementing these recommendations, if approved.	The performance of TPAS Cymru will be reviewed internally by Assembly officials in March 2004 (one full year after the main recommendations of the Review have been implemented).

14. Turning to the recommendations for TPAS, TPAS and the Welsh Assembly Government broadly agree with these and will discuss an implementation plan.

### **Next Steps**

15. To implement its recommendations, TPAS is seeking to carry out three reviews with consultancy support ("financial management accounting and reporting", "organisation structure" and "member services"). They ask that, *"the Assembly Government considers providing funding of consultancy input to these important reviews to secure the future of TPAS Cymru."* It is proposed that Assembly Government officials meet with TPAS to discuss this issue.

16. On funding levels, it is proposed that Assembly Government core funding to TPAS remain at existing planned levels while TPAS and Housing Directorate officials work towards implementation of the Review's recommendations. Funding levels should be reviewed in March 2004 (one full year after the main recommendations of the Review have been implemented) and each year thereafter. By March 2004, the Assembly Government will have clearly distinguished which activities its core funding supports and will have been able to measure the outcomes achieved with this funding in 2003-04.

17. In the broader policy context, it is proposed that the Assembly Government should review the fundamental rationale underpinning its tenant participation / empowerment policies, programmes and funding. The principal aim would be to clarify the long-term outcomes the Assembly Government wants to see achieved i.e.:

- qualify the benefits to be achieved through tenant participation and involvement in decisions on local and neighbourhood housing strategies, investment options, housing services and community projects; and to

- assess the type and level of action needed to realise these benefits and the cost involved.

18. It is proposed that the Review should also have scope to explore the feasibility and potential benefits of introducing an all-encompassing "Tenant Involvement Quality Standard".

19. This proposed policy review would be carried in the context of the National Housing Strategy, "Better Homes", recognising that new policies should seek to make a positive contribution to the realisation of the vision in "Better Homes" and to achieving high quality in all aspects of Wales' housing provision, management and development.

20. Lastly, it is proposed that the review be carried out through a process of research and consultation with landlords and tenants. It is particularly important that tenants should be at the heart of any review, and be directly involved on a regular basis.