

Making 'Here's the Deal', the Real Deal



**A report from the 2010
Community Engagement Service Review Event
Wednesday 4th July 2007**

Our commitment

2010 Rotherham Ltd is committed to involving you – Rotherham’s tenants and residents – in running the housing service, and in decisions that affect your homes and communities.

We know that involving people in managing their homes and communities is vital to deliver better housing services and to improve the quality of life for all. Offering customers lots of different opportunities to share views and ideas will help 2010 to give customers the services they want; in the way they want them. That's why we want the views of people who live in our communities - people like you!

The government is challenging Councils and other Registered Social Landlords to answer to their customers. It's part of the drive to renew interest in local democracy, to modernise local government and to improve local services. Tenant and resident involvement is a vital part of this process. It gives you more of a say - as an individual or through a tenants and residents' association. It means you can take part in local decisions about how your estate is run, and gives you the chance to have input into wider policy changes that affect you, your homes and communities.

It is very important, therefore that 2010 Rotherham Ltd gets together with you and other customers to find the best ways to help people get involved. We want our services to be accessible to everyone so we need to find good ways to engage with people who perhaps find it difficult to get involved. We need to develop our skills and knowledge to do this so we can effectively engage with younger tenants, for example, or people from the black and ethnic minority communities.

Meeting customers to review the opportunities available to engage with 2010 Rotherham Ltd is, therefore, very important, and that's why we decided to “*go for it in a big way*” at our first ever “Making ‘Here’s the Deal’ the Real Deal’ event.

We hope you enjoy our report!
Phil Rees, Caroline Boyle, Colette Williams,
Debbie Brashaw, Lynne Rowan & Lynn Hartley

Background

On Wednesday 4th July 2010 Rotherham Ltd held the “Making ‘Here’s the Deal’ the Real Deal” event as part of 2010 Rotherham Ltd’s review of our Community Engagement Service. The intention of this interactive event was to explore:

- how influential our customers can be
- the things that make our customers and communities influential
- the things we can do at 2010 to make community involvement more effective
- whether all the opportunities to influence what we do at 2010 actually fit together in the best possible way, to the benefit of our customers.

Trying out some new ideas...

Our X-Factor Panel stirred things up a bit with comments and challenges throughout the day. We would therefore like to acknowledge their support and help.



From the left; Anita Heaton, Leaseholder rep on the 2010 Board; Keith Stringer, tenant rep on the 2010 Board; Cllr Rose McNeely, Chair of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel; Kerry McGrath, Community Empowerment Network (CEN) Voluntary Action Rotherham; Cllr Jane Austin, Council rep on the 2010 Board; and Liz Booth, tenant rep on the 2010 board.

We also supplied people with our latest technological development – the 2010 jargon buster!



Whenever words or phrases were used that people didn't know, they used the jargon buster blower to alert speakers to use plain English so we would all understand what was being said.

A BIG thank you!

Above all else, we would like to thank all of you who attended our event, giving us a clearer insight into what we do now and how together, we can give you, our customers a greater say in the decisions that affect your homes and communities.

Attendees:

Tenants and Residents Association Table

Pauline Clay
Andrew Fenwick-Green
Ann Hitchens
Jean Jones
Ian Jones

Rother Fed Table

Peter Blanksby
Hilary Cahill
Alan Goy
Christine Hammond
David Wilkes
Roy Mugglestone
Lillian Shears
Pat Woodcock

Key Player, Focus Groups and New to Involvement Table

Graham Wright
Joan Stansfield
Kumkum Chandra
Mrs Copley
Mr Copley

Area Housing Panel Table

Winnie Billups
David Dobbs
Hanzaleh Hamidi
Alexander Kay
Derek Reeder

And last but not least, thanks to our facilitators:

Andrew Leigh
Helen Renshaw
and Janet Simpson

Key Recommendations

By the end of the day, we had a set of recommendations endorsed by those present.

- Develop a network of Street representatives – individual tenants trained and empowered with relevant housing information to give to their neighbours
- Make people aware of the link between Rother Fed and the Community Development and Partnerships Committee of the 2010 Board, as a way for tenants to share information, influence and support the tenants' representatives on the 2010 Board
- Devise an easy to understand 'picture story' of how the various groups and individuals link up and communicate (*the 'string exercise' – but simpler!*)
- Ensure that Area Housing Panel representatives
 - Have an induction process for new AHP members to help them feel comfortable and confident in participating at meetings
 - Have opportunities to meet up and share good practice
 - Operate in a consistent way (applying the same rules etc.)
 - Consider ways to improve their accountability to their communities, and ways the communities can elect or endorse the people on the panels
 - Consider how the panels can link into the Area Assemblies
- Develop a Key Player Newsletter to give feedback on what's been achieved and to encourage participation in new projects
- Produce an effective communication strategy specific to Community Engagement



Agree or disagree?

“Do you believe you can influence change in 2010?”

This is what the groups said...

Tenants new to involvement



We feel that even though we have not done very much yet (as we are new to this) we can make a difference by getting involved. A score of 6 means we believe we can influence change but need to do it and see it work before a higher score can be recorded.

Focus Groups

There are only two of us here involved in focus groups. We scored a 6 for this statement as the group we sit on is still a fairly new one. However we do feel that we have the ability to influence change and have indeed started to do that by suggesting, then having it agreed, that one of the Repairs and Maintenance group members spend some time with 2010 operatives, first off with the Gas Fitters. We think that our abilities to influence even greater change will grow in the future as we get more into the workings of this service. Watch this space...we expect this score to go up!



Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs)



We gave our score between 6 and 7. TARAs are being made more and more aware of the support available to them from Rother Fed and Champions. This assists us in building our confidence and empowers us to challenge more. We need to convince other people to get involved; there's a lot of apathy and frustration to overcome. However, slowly but surely, more people are making a difference!

Area Housing Panels



A score of 7 is the order of the day for us AHP reps. We do make a difference to our communities and we are able to influence change. We listen to what local people say they want and if it fits the criteria for spending, we will do our best to deliver. We can't do that unless 2010 listens to us, and they do. We have regular meetings with Neighbourhood Champions, who can help us facilitate change. However, the level of staff support does not seem to be consistent across the borough.

Rother Fed

And last but by no means least, Rother Fed gives a fantastic score of 8! We have the ability to give tenants, local TARAs and AHPs a louder, collective voice. 2010 representatives are often at our meetings (i.e. Community Development Managers) and we invite other key staff and senior managers as and when we need them. We are a partner in 'Here's the Deal', we took part in writing 'Here's the Deal' and are involved in the Compact Monitoring Group.



X-Factor Panel Comments

- 2010 is still a very young company and needs to prove itself.
- Do we need to promote confidence in individuals to help them have more influence?
- Leaseholders – do they feel they have less influence over change in 2010?
- The Leaseholder Forum needs to be incorporated into all areas of influence. Does Rother Fed see a link with the Leaseholder Forum?
- The voting seems to mirror the size of each group – individuals/small groups have a lower score, larger groups have a higher score.
- Don't forget that Councillors can influence change as well, and tenants can influence Councillors!
- 2010 has encouraged more involvement; slowly but surely more people are making a difference.



Comments from the floor



- No! Leaseholders do not seem to have any influence at all!
- TARAs see themselves as a middleman between the public and 2010 and the Council.
- You have to believe you can make changes
- Rother Fed's influence depends on the strength of our TARAs.
- People on 'decision making bodies' will know what influence they have, more so than other groups.
- Meetings need to be publicised more with directions and bus routes included.
- Communities are changing – They're different from the traditional pit villages and need to look within themselves to build community spirit.

2010 concludes...

- **We need to work on restoring the confidence of leaseholders. We know they meet as a Leaseholder Forum, but that's no good if they still can't get things done.**
- **We need to underline our willingness to improve by publicising what we've actually done; by showing how we've changed things as a result of listening to our customers.**

Workshop one – what’s it all about?

Each table was then asked to discuss and answer 3 questions with the help of a facilitator. The following is a summary from the TARA, AHP and Rother Fed tables.

1. In one sentence, summarise the main purpose or ‘vision’ of this ‘group’
2. Who serves on the ‘group’ and how do they get there?
3. Should the purpose and/or process of membership change/develop?

TARAs



- We bring together a cleaner, safer community and act as a facilitator between residents and 2010
- We try to encourage inclusion of everyone living in our area
- We need to do more to encourage the inclusion of people from different age groups on our estates

Area Housing Panels

- We allocate money (as much as the Council/2010 will give us!) to projects that have been put forward by local tenants/residents that will improve the environment.
- Tenants, residents and leaseholders are invited to join the group. We try to include all groups and communities of interest by ‘word of mouth’.
- We were so busy talking about all the wonderful things that AHPs do in the community that we ran out of time to discuss the last question!



Rother Fed

- To have a voice and influence for all ('all' being the whole community). We are all about uniting and representing tenants and residents in decisions about their homes and communities.

- Our board members are elected from our membership – 2 TARA reps from each of the Area Assembly areas who serve for 3 years before they need to stand down (but can be re-elected) and one rep nominated from each Area Housing Panel who serves for 1 year, but can be re-nominated by their panel.



- We need to consider how leaseholders and former tenants (those who bought councils homes) can get involved with Rother Fed.

- We need to produce more information on services and

links that would help to empower local organisations and the community – a directory, for instance, that would be updated and promoted regularly.

X-Factor Panel Comments

- I've learnt a lot from this session about the way these groups are organised. Is this information readily available?
- How do the AHPs link into the Area Assemblies? It appears that some report and some don't?

Comments from the floor

- How can we get younger people involved? They don't seem to be interested.
- People talk to their neighbours – a very effective way of sharing information.

2010 concludes...

We need to gather information and do more promotion about what all the groups do, how they do it and show our customers how they can get involved. We can do this through various ways i.e. face to face at the many community events taking place throughout the year; articles in 'Round Your Place' and Rother Fed's Newsletters; at Area Assembly meetings; the local press; the 2010 and Rother Fed web sites; local radio; posters in Neighbourhood offices and community centres... Have you got a great idea for promotion? Let us know!

Focus Groups, Key Players and Tenants New to Participation table were asked to discuss a different set of questions:

1. What do you see yourself achieving by being involved?
 2. Has anything ever stopped you from getting involved?
 3. What should be done to make getting involved more effective?
- Some people feel that it is a waste of time; there is a lot of negativity towards getting involved.
 - Some people can be vociferous (very vocal or loud) for example at meetings, but then don't do anything about what their complaint is. This can put new people off, particularly those who lack confidence.
 - More support for people generally.
 - Explanations of what the different groups do.
 - Explore ideas to make it more 'personal'.
 - Ask more questions in a direct way.
 - There seems to be a mixed view of Area Assemblies.
 - Increase the frequency of 'Round Your Place' and print articles with lots of photos to show what has been achieved as a result of getting involved. We need to brag more about the good work we do – "Your area needs you!"
 - Advertise opportunities more and use promotional events both borough wide and more smaller events at a local level.
 - We also need to look at different ways of getting more young people involved, for example by using Text Messages.
 - 'Genuine' people interested in involvement don't need incentives or rewards
 - But they may need practical help such as transport



2010 Comment

Wow, this table was on a roll!

We will take every comment on board.

Did you know that we will arrange for taxis for those with a disability who cannot access public transport? And we can cover travel expenses, mileage or bus fare for everyone else.

Agree or disagree...

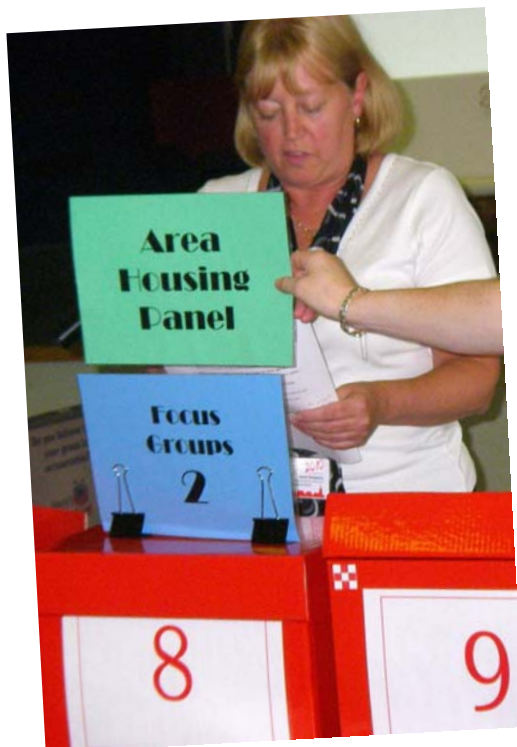
“Do you believe your group is accountable?”

Tenants New to Participation and Key Players

- We gave these two groups a low score of three because those tenants new to participation haven't been involved long enough to accurately answer this question. Time will tell.
- Key Player representatives felt that they are generally involved as individuals and that their input is based on their own personal experiences rather than that of a group. We don't see a low score here as a bad thing, it's just the nature of things.



Focus Groups and AHPs



- Focus Groups - Although we join focus groups as individuals and not as representatives from other groups, we do talk about our neighbours' experiences too. We need to consider everyone in our discussions and not just our own experiences.
- AHPs – We also gave a score of 8. Our panels are made up of members of the community – usually put forward by other local groups such as TARAs, local Councillors – who are already accountable to the electorate, and Champions – 2010 staff members tasked to working with us. We feel that the way we come together make us very accountable. The money available to us must be spent according to the criteria already set and all projects must be given the go ahead by one of the Community Development Managers before any money is spent.

Rother Fed and TARAs

- Rother Fed – Our board members come from our member organisations, our TARAs and AHPs. Staff are accountable to the Manger and the Manger is accountable to the Board. Our decisions are therefore made by group consensus and not by individuals.
- TARAs – To be recognised by 2010 and become members of Rother Fed, we have to have include clauses in our constitutions that aid accountability. For many residents, we are their first port of call; we are visual and they know we will try our best to help.



X-Factor Panel Comments

- We need to build closer links with officers
- Consider producing a Key Player Newsletter to keep those involved informed of what their involvement has produced.
- Involve your local Councillors, we can help to.
- With such high scores – we'll need more boxes next year!



Comments from the floor



- The 'Learning from Customers' Group checks to see if services are accountable
- I never receive information as a tenant, only as a member of a group.
- We rely on Neighbourhood Champions for relevant up to date information.
- Staff move around too much, which creates a problem.
- Do TARAs really take into account the diversity that exists in their communities?

Putting all the pieces together

Everything was going so well until **the string game...**



Up until this moment it was evident that people felt we had good structures in place with some pretty high scores on bringing about change and accountability.

However...



What a tangled web we weave!

The object of this activity was to gauge how well individuals and various groups link together and communicate with each other. It showed where things were working well and where things go wrong. People were asked to score how effective the communication channels currently are between the various groups with 1 representing poor communications and 10 representing excellent links.

Tenant links to the Key Player Initiative – scored 1

Most people don't know what Key Players have done unless they are involved themselves. It needs to be published more.



'Learning from Customers' group links to individual tenants – scored 4

How can tenants get involved with Learning from Customers? Do people know how? Could this be advertised more?

Individual tenants linking into TARAs – scored 4

How do people find out what their TARA is doing and how do they inform their TARA of what they think, want or need?



Individual tenants linking into AHPs – score 2

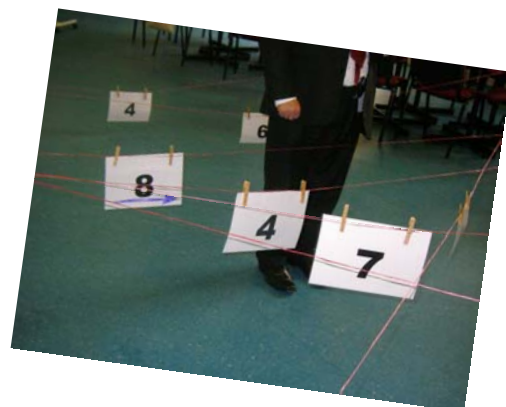
There are inconsistencies across the borough. How well do AHPs inform tenants, Community Partnerships, TARAs and local Councillors of their work?

TARAs links to AHPs – scored 4

There are many TARAs that do not have members on their local AHP. How can these TARAs link up with and get involved in the AHPs? We need to consider other ways of gathering information.

AHPs linking into Rother Fed - 8

Because each AHP has a rep on our Board, the links are very strong. However, how well is the information from Rother Fed getting back to the panels? Should there be a standard format that all reps use to help them feedback?



Neighbourhood Champions linking with individual tenants (e.g. estate walkabouts) – scored 6

We need to get more people involved. Can we standardise walkabouts and consider themed ones, i.e. young people and how safe they feel walking around their neighbourhoods?

Rother Fed linking up with TARAs – scored 7

We provide a regular newsletter to our member groups that keep them informed of what is happening, but we need to encourage TARAs to communicate back to us. Our Membership Development Officer has contacted all the TARAs in Rotherham but not all of them have responded yet.



Rother Fed linking into the 2010 Board – scored 7

There is a good link to the Board through regular updates at the 2010 Community Development and Partnership Committee.

Individual tenants links to the 2010 Board – scored 7

The idea of a Tenant Advisory Panel was considered to support tenant reps on the 2010 Board, but we need to consider people's time commitments. Perhaps we can devise a way for groups to link into the Board and back again through Rother Fed and the Community Development and Partnership Committee.

AHPs linking up with Area Assemblies – scored 3

This link is not consistent; not all Area Assemblies receive info from AHPs. Money can go further when AHPs work with other agencies such as Streetpride. Perhaps panels need training sessions on match funding and how it works?

AHPs should have their own page on the 2010 web-site, perhaps even a blog.



2010 link with Leaseholders – scored 1

There is a leaseholder on the 2010 Board but there seems to be a conflict between 2010 staff and the Leaseholder Forum – some staff think that there is effective communication but the leaseholders do not share that view.

VAR links with Rother Fed – scored 4

We need to communicate more.

VAR links into Strategic Housing Partnership – scored 7

We have members of the CEN (Community Empowerment Network) on the Board. The Chair of Rother Fed sits on the Partnership Board but is his position supported by Rother Fed? How does he feed back to tenants?



Comments from the floor

That was a real eye opener! I have a much better idea of who all the different groups are and how well, and not so well, we all connect to each other.

2010 Conclusions

- The exercise showed that there are lots of ways for people to be involved but it's not easy to understand how it all fits together!
- Some representatives don't have the support and connections to communicate effectively with the people they represent.
- People are obviously concerned about the time commitment involved and were understandably reluctant to commit to extra meetings to improve this structure.
- There wasn't a lot of support for the idea of electing or approving volunteers for the Area Housing Panels at an Area Assembly level conference once or twice a year, but we do need to explore how we can make representatives more clearly accountable to the communities they serve. If this is done, AHPs would have more of a case to claim a place on the Area Assembly Co-ordinating Groups, for example, and this would give them more influence over local decision making.

Workshop Two

This was about increasing the influence customers can have on 2010.

Back to work at our tables, the groups worked with the facilitators to come up with some action points to help groups be more influential and more action points to make 2010 and the Council more receptive, because that's important too!



Focus Groups, Key Players and Tenants New to Participation Table

- Sometimes the language is too technical or full of jargon - use lay person language, make it easier to understand.
- Get tenants more involved in shadowing staff so we understand what goes on from their point of view, such as gas servicing.
- We could do with a better understanding of the senior management roles

Area Housing Panel Table

- Bring back Policy Panels – for instance repairs & maintenance where tenants influenced appointments, tenancy agreements and skilled workmen
- Strengthen existing links that AHPs have with TARAs
- Publicise ourselves – make our presence and influence known to Area Assemblies for a start
- Bring Chairs or maybe 3 members from each panel together every quarter so we can share knowledge and best practice
- Give us more money so we can do even more!
- Keep us more informed more often
- Give the panels a higher priority and a more important role with 2010 and the Council



TARA Table



- Better structured walkabouts – do more out of normal hours
- Improve customer services
- Quick response team
- Provide more staff dedicated to participation
- More money for projects
- Provide a forum for TARAs to get together
- New TARAs need help to put accountability systems in place

Rother Fed Table

- Listen and act – action plan
- Promote and re-launch
- More formal structured meetings with 2010
- Provide updates on Estate Management Action Plans
- Develop the street rep idea to help build up strength on the ground

What can Rother Fed do?

- Raise our profile
 - newsletters
 - e-mail
 - attend local events like summer fairs
 - produce DVDs of our work
 - promote successes
 - encourage the street rep idea



OK – so what will 2010 do about the things suggested at this event?

Some really good action points came out of the last session and throughout the day. We've made a special note of the Key Recommendations on page 5, and here are some things we are happy to do from now on.

Stamp out Jargon!

Our Community Development Team is excellent at replacing jargon (gobbledygook) with easy to understand language, but we need to share this skill with other members of staff, to help customers understand the more technical terminology.

Our commitment – we will produce a briefing paper and send it to all 2010 staff on how to speak and write in plain language.

What do you do?

Many tenants do not know what our various staff members do, or who does what. From office staff to operatives, right through to Senior Managers, it can be hard to know who you should contact to solve a problem. This can cause misunderstandings and frustrations.

Our commitment – we will work up a way to give tenants the opportunity to shadow our staff to see first hand what goes on within 2010. We can then share these shadowing experiences in future editions of 'Round Your Place'.

Area Housing Panel Best Practice Meetings

Bringing members of the Area Housing Panels together under one roof, 3 or 4 times per year, will allow members to share their knowledge and best practice. This can only strengthen their role in the community, and improve their links with the Area Assemblies and their contributions to the Area Assembly plans. It will also help to standardise their role across the borough - something that came out several times during the day.

Our commitment – we will arrange the first meeting to take place in the autumn of 2007. During this meeting we can agree the format for future sessions, who will service the meetings (facilitate, take notes, send out reminders etc), who should attend, as well as setting a series of meetings to take place the following year.

Community Engagement Communication Strategy

In light of recent changes to staff structures in 2010, and what has come out of this event (particularly the string game!) there is a clear need for a thorough communication strategy. A communication strategy can show staff and customers how stronger links are made between groups, 2010 and the council; ensure we publicise all the good work we all do, so it gets out to our customers and other agencies; and provide action plans to ensure what has come out of this event and future events actually happens.

Our commitment – As part of the Community Engagement Service Review, we will identify staff to work with a group of tenants to develop this strategy, starting in the autumn of 2007. Our Aim is to have the strategy completed and in action by early 2008.

Of course, this is not all!
We have a lot of work to do, besides what we are already committed to doing in the compact – ‘Here’s the Deal’.

This is what “Making ‘Here’s the Deal’ the Real Deal” is all about!



And if we don't deliver...watch out for that right hook!

Into the future

At the end of the event Caroline Boyle and Debbie Brashaw explained what would be happening next. Caroline, along with Colette Williams will be meeting with various groups of people in the weeks ahead to carry out a new technique called 'Moments of Truth'. This exercise is about finding the 'Moments of Truth' when people decide they will definitely get involved with 2010 or they definitely won't. What makes the difference? What makes getting involved a good experience? And what would just turn you off?

Debbie explained that 2010 will produce the report of the "Making 'Here's the Deal' the Real Deal" event as

- a booklet with loads of pictures
- a website display
- and as a wall display on 2010's 'Stairway to Involvement'

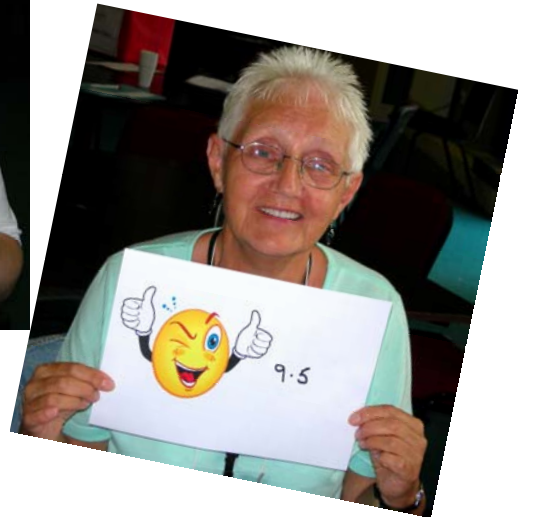
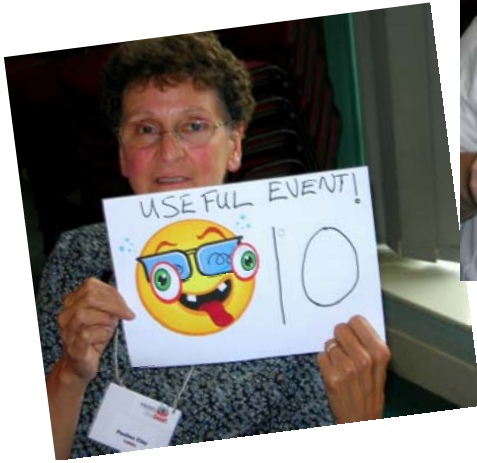
It will also form part of the final report of the Community Engagement Service Review.

And finally...

On behalf of everyone who attended the event, Liz Booth, tenant representative on the 2010 Board, thanked the 2010 staff who had organised the event for a most interesting and enjoyable day.

And here's how you scored it in the feedback session!





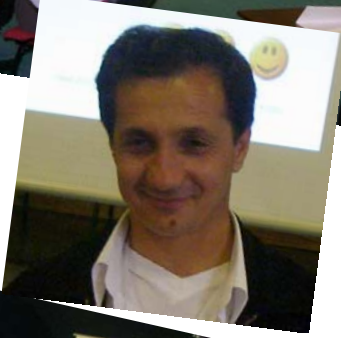




Do you believe that you can influence change in 2010?
Here's the Deal!

Clr Jane Austin
Liz Booth

TADA'S 3



TADA'S 4

TADA'S 4



Here's the Deal!

