



Vale of Glamorgan Council

Best Value and Tenant Participation Workshops

Final Report: June 2002

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the tenant and resident representatives from the Vale of Glamorgan Council Resident Boards and local registered social landlords for giving generously of their time, energy and ideas and demonstrating such clear commitment to this project. We are grateful to the Gibbonsdown Resident Board for use of their offices which provided an excellent venue for the meetings.

We would also like to thank all the Vale of Glamorgan Council Officers who contributed to the project, in particular Nick Selwyn who provided constant support and encouragement.

Tamsin Stirling and Monica Keeble
Rowan Associates

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

The Best Value and Tenant Participation project set out to work with tenant and resident representatives of the four Vale of Glamorgan Council Resident Boards to develop the Council's tenant participation compact and best value service. Representatives of local registered social landlords were invited to attend the workshops and contribute their ideas.

This innovative project was the first within Wales to carry out work to consult with tenant and resident representatives, to set standards and performance measurements for the whole of the Local Authority's housing management and maintenance service. The work was carried out through a comprehensive programme of information sessions and discussion workshops which were facilitated by independent tenant advisors.

The project received Section 16 funding from the National Assembly for Wales, and the work was co-ordinated by Rowan Associates, independent housing consultants.

A AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The aim of the project was to work with tenants and residents representatives to develop a comprehensive participation system that fully empowers tenants to audit and evaluate policies, procedures and standards relating to the Vale of Glamorgan Council's services to tenants.

The objectives of the project were to:

- ❖ develop the Council's tenant participation compact and Best Value service
- ❖ review and develop policies, procedures, service standards and local performance indicators that feed into and shape the development of the tenant compact
- ❖ establish tenant supported service standards and service review plans
- ❖ enhance performance management and monitoring systems

B METHODS

The project was carried out in the following key stages:

- ❖ tenant and resident representatives were invited to participate in a series of discussion workshops
- ❖ the areas for discussion and framework for the workshops were developed with tenants, residents and Vale officers
- ❖ nine workshops were held between November 2001 and March 2002. In addition, three feedback sessions were held, one after each third workshop, to gather responses from Vale officers and develop an action plan and timetable

- ◇ lunch was provided at the majority of sessions, and tenant and resident travel expenses were refunded at each meeting

C THE DISCUSSION WORKSHOPS

The workshops covered the following areas:

1. Introductory workshop, and day to day repairs and maintenance (Part 1)
2. Day to day repairs and maintenance (Part 2)
3. Planned maintenance and maintenance of open spaces

Feedback session 1

4. Anti-social behaviour, nuisance and crime
5. Letting properties
6. Rent collection and rent arrears

Feedback session 2

7. Tenancy matters
8. Changing circumstances
9. Concluding workshop, and discussion of outstanding issues

Feedback session 3

The workshops were carried out as follows:

- ◇ corrections and additions to the draft notes of the previous workshop
- ◇ a presentation by the relevant Vale officer. The presentation included:
 - * a description of the service
 - * existing standards and how these are measured
 - * current key issues
 - * ideas for the future
- ◇ the presentation was followed by a discussion facilitated by Rowan Associates. This covered the following areas:
 - * things that work well about the service
 - * problems about the service
 - * ideas for improvement
 - * tenant involvement in reviewing and monitoring the service

D PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROJECT

The workshops and feedback sessions were consistently well attended and included representatives from the following:

Gibbonsdown Residents Board

Mary Christie, Molly Conway, Jean Jones and Evelyn McAuley

Shakespeare Residents Association

Maggie Payne and Les Lixton

Harbour View and Royal Close Residents Board

Betty Gelling and Shirley Sansome

Colcot Residents Association

Albert Clarke

Sheltered Housing

Irene Gannon

Hafod Housing Association

Margaret Howell and Vicky Ibbertson

Newydd Housing Association

Jenet Lockwood and Debbie Phillips

In addition, the following Council officers gave presentations at the workshops or attended the feedback sessions:

Nick Selwyn
Mike Ingram
Leigh Caveney
Elizabeth Willington

Miles Punter
Jeremy Miles
Rob Thomas

Monica Keeble and Tamsin Stirling of Rowan Associates facilitated each of the workshops and feedback sessions.

SECTION TWO: HOUSING SERVICES – TENANTS VIEWS AND ACTION

This section sets out the detailed outcomes of the project. It is divided into a number of sub-sections:

- a Day-to-day repairs and maintenance
- b Planned maintenance and maintenance of open spaces
- c Anti-social behaviour, nuisance and crime
- d Letting properties
- e Rent collection and rent arrears
- f Tenancy matters
- g Changing circumstances

For each sub-section, the key issues raised by the tenant and resident representatives during the workshop(s) are highlighted, the detailed action plan set out and standards and performance measures identified. It should be noted that corporate standards set by the Vale of Glamorgan Council, such as customer care standards on speed of response to letters and in answering the telephone, are not identified here as they are expected to apply across all services.

The aim of the action plans is to enable progress with addressing the issues raised to be monitored by tenant and resident representatives, Officers and elected Members.

All the action plans in this section of the report use the following timescales:

3-6 months	Short
6-12 months	Medium
12-18 months or more	Long

The timescales for completion of tasks will start once the report has been formally adopted by the Cabinet; this is likely to be by June 2002.

Some actions are shown as complete (shaded). These are complete in terms of action to be carried out by the Council; action may still be required by appropriate tenants and residents groups.

The following abbreviations are used to show which Council Officers are identified as the lead officers to take forward individual items within the action plans:

Phil Beaman	PB
Jan Bruton	JB
Leigh Caveney	LC
Joan Davies	JD
John Gleeson	JG
Mike Ingram	MI
Jeremy Miles	JM
Miles Punter	MP

Nick Selwyn	NJS
Ian Walters	IW
Rachael Williams	RW
Elizabeth Willington	EW

A DAY-TO-DAY REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Workshops looking at day-to-day repairs and maintenance were held on 5th November and 12th November 2001. Discussions during the workshops on day-to-day repairs and maintenance focused on:

- ◇ reporting repairs
- ◇ priority of repairs
- ◇ standard of repairs and contractors
- ◇ information about repairs and the service
- ◇ repairs that are charged back to tenants
- ◇ tenant involvement

Key issues raised by the group were that:

- ◇ there are a number of problems with the reporting of repairs by tenants eg having to report repairs more than once, lack of clear response as to what will happen next once repairs are reported, lack of clear guidance for officers taking repairs as to what priority different repairs should be awarded
- ◇ normally the out-of-hours service is very good
- ◇ existing repair priorities do not adequately take into account the circumstances of individuals and the existing priorities do not include all repair types
- ◇ the quality of repairs is not consistently good and contractors do not always adhere to the code of conduct. However, some council workers are excellent trades people
- ◇ information provided by the council to tenants about repairs is not always adequate or accurate
- ◇ repairs caused by deliberate damage should be recharged to tenants and there should be liaison between landlords where damage has been caused so that these tenants are not rehoused by another landlord without them knowing what has happened during the tenancy

ACTION PLAN: DAY-TO-DAY REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

	<u>Reporting Repairs:</u> suggestions for improvement	Vale response	LA named officers	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
RR1	Be able to phone straight through to maintenance section – a free phone number to report repairs straight through to the Alps is seen as a very good idea	<p>Reporting repairs is currently part of the customer liaison function which is carried out by housing services</p> <p>A free phone number for repairs – this decision would need to be taken by the council overall and not just housing. Free phone numbers for other services are currently being considered too. The final decision will be taken to Cabinet</p>	Authority overall – no named officer		MEDIUM	<p>No new resource implications</p> <p>Resource implications for free-phone not part of this study</p>	
RR2	Customer care training for all staff who answer the phone/take repair orders	<p>Training is to be provided for staff who answer the phone and take repair orders including receptionists</p> <p>A training programme is to be put in place jointly between housing services and building services on internal procedures and how these can be improved. Customer care training is also to be provided</p> <p>It was agreed that tenant representatives should be involved in training</p>	<p>JM</p> <p>NJS</p> <p>JM</p> <p>NJS</p>	Contribute to the training	SHORT	From within existing HCS/BM budgets	

RR2 (cont)	Customer care training for all staff who answer the phone/take repair orders	<p>A member of staff from building services is to be placed in housing services to assess repair requests.</p> <p>It was agreed that this should be reviewed with tenant representatives after 6 months to see if it is improving the service</p> <p>A toolkit is to be produced to help tenants and staff more clearly identify repairs – this will be made available to residents groups and officers, with a summary in the tenant's handbook</p>	JM NJS JM	Report back from tenants	SHORT SHORT	From within existing BM budgets	COMPLETE
RR3	Have phones answered by staff who are trained and knowledgeable about maintenance and familiar with the different estates	As above – training	JM NJS		SHORT	From within existing HCS/BM budgets	
RR4	Also need a free phone number for contractors working on estates eg doing gas servicing	See above comment on free phone numbers	MP		MEDIUM	Resource implications for free-phone not part of this study	
RR5	Localised service – by estate or geographical area	With the new structure, officers are divided between East and West areas so they do have patches					COMPLETE
RR6	Officers with 'patches' so that they know the areas	With the new structure, officers are divided between East and West areas so they do have patches					COMPLETE

	Prioritising Repairs: suggestions for improvement	Vale response	LA named officers	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
PR1	List all possible repairs and prioritise them	<p>A new schedule of all repairs and their costs is being put together. This needs to go to Cabinet. After this, the existing priority codings will be looked at, eg taking tenant vulnerability into account</p> <p>A summary of the schedule is to be made available to tenants and the full schedule to residents boards</p> <p>All the existing priorities will be set out alongside what the legislation requires, and an indication of numbers of repairs currently carried out within each priority. Priorities will be established with full tenant involvement and information on costs and budget</p> <p>A 3-hour priority is feasible but only for very high priorities. Some repairs may get lower priority – this is all up for discussion</p> <p>There is a minimal weekend service at the moment – the priorities exercise should inform whether or not this should be increased. Cost will need to be taken into account</p>	JG MP MP MP MP	Input into priorities	SHORT MEDIUM SHORT MEDIUM SHORT	<p>From within existing BM budgets</p> <p>No new resource implications</p> <p>No new resource implications</p> <p>No new resource implications</p> <p>No new resource implications</p>	

PR1 (cont)	<p>List all possible repairs and prioritise them</p> <p>To do this, a survey of tenants could be carried out to see what their priorities are</p>	<p>It was agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - examples of the costs of repairs and relevant hourly rates should be included in the tenants handbook - there will be a fundamental review with tenants and residents every x years (to be agreed). Where problems are identified during the year, eg by satisfaction slip responses, there will be a yearly review to address these problems. 	<p>LC</p> <p>MP</p>	<p>To contribute to development of tenant handbook</p>	<p>MEDIUM</p> <p>MEDIUM</p>	<p>£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP</p> <p>No new resource implications</p>	
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	Standard of Repairs and Contractors: suggestions for improvement	Vale response	LA named officers	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
SRC1	All council properties should receive a fair and equal service	Council policy and practice is that all areas receive a fair and equal service. The contractor's code of conduct will reinforce these requirements.					COMPLETE
SRC2	There should be a compensation policy for tenants if contractors don't turn up for appointments	There are already penalty clauses for contractors A compensation policy can be considered but any money that pays for compensation is not used for repairs. The preferred approach is to implement the appointments system and make this work well	JM		MEDIUM		COMPLETE
SRC3	The council should develop a set of service standards with tenants and officers – look at other examples and include repair priorities within standards	An appointment system is to be introduced with am and PM appointments initially. The aim is for 2 hour appointments eventually A code of conduct for contractors is to be developed. Tenant representatives will be involved in setting this up and reviewing it All council staff have ID and tenants should ask to see it Standards for letting empty properties will be developed – tenants views have been developed	JM JG	Input to code of conduct Advise that tenants ask for ID Drafted standards	MEDIUM MEDIUM	From within existing BM budgets No new resource implications	COMPLETE COMPLETE

SRC4	Have satisfaction slips for tenants to complete after repairs completed	<p>These are going to be introduced – a receipt/acknowledgement of repairs reported along with a satisfaction slip will be sent out each day for each repair reported that day</p> <p>It was agreed that a draft will go to group members for comments</p> <p>Tenants need to be very clear about whether they are signing a satisfaction slip or whether they are signing to confirm that a contractor has turned up</p> <p>Vale to report on feedback from slips</p>	<p>RW (receipt)</p> <p>JM (satisfaction slips)</p>	<p>Input into design of slips</p>	MEDIUM	<p>From within existing BM budgets</p> <p>No new resource implications</p> <p>No new resource implications</p> <p>Not applicable</p>	
SRC5	There should be a free phone number for complaints	See earlier comments on free phone numbers				Not applicable	
SRC6	For large contracts, copies of contracts should be provided to tenants organisations and they should also be able to meet with the contractors	<p>The authority's standing orders require that the tendering process is closed i.e. the leader of the council and finance director open tenders.</p> <p>However, tenant representatives can be involved in drawing up contracts</p> <p>Also, once contracts are awarded, tenant representatives can meet with the contractors</p> <p>Priorities for future large contracts will be identified by stock condition surveys that will be an independent assessment of property condition and disrepair.</p>	<p>JG</p> <p>IW</p>	<p>Input into drawing up contracts</p> <p>Meet contractors</p>	ONGOING	<p>No new resource implications</p> <p>No new resource implications</p> <p>No new resource implications</p> <p>No new resource implications</p>	

SRC7	There should be 'ranging' caretakers – they shouldn't be resident because they can be victimised – Newport example – they are needed on estates mainly during evenings and weekends	Community Estate Workers do some of this now and when they are fully operable will be picking up a lot of this. However, they will not work weekends/evenings/bank holidays.				Not applicable	COMPLETE
SRC 8	There should be increased consultation with tenants over large jobs and increased choice on repair options eg UPVC or wood windows	Agreed - but link to Stock Condition Survey and other Corporate policies - e.g. Agenda 21 and sustainability, energy efficiency, etc.	IW			No new resource implications	ONGOING

	Information to Tenants: suggestions for improvement	Vale response	LA named officers	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
RIT2	Complaints – tenants should get acknowledgement of their complaint, response and explanation of what can and cannot be done and why. Action is needed on complaints	This will be covered by the acknowledgement and satisfaction slips and the monitoring system set up by Building Services to oversee this.	JM		MEDIUM	From within existing BM budgets	
RIT3	When repairs are reported, these should always be acknowledged, with information on what repair has been reported, what priority it gets and an appointment am or PM when contractor will call (except for emergencies)	Acknowledgement and satisfaction slips to be introduced above	RW JM		MEDIUM	From within existing BM budgets	
RIT4	Tenants need information overall about repairs and for their area eg - number of repairs done, number completed within target times - the budget, and how much has been spent on repairs - contractors used - number of satisfaction slips returned	This will be developed as other things progress e.g. introduction of satisfaction slips The aim is to get to a position where tenant representatives and officers sit down and discuss issues in full knowledge of budgets and performance information etc Budget will not be divided by area but performance information, for example the number of jobs, % on target etc.	MP NJS RW JM	Agree monitoring system	MEDIUM	No new resource implication	

	Rechargeable Repairs: suggestions for improvement	Vale response	LA named officers	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Resource	Progress
RR1	Representatives would like to see more recharges where people - damage their own property deliberately - cause criminal damage to other people's property	There is a recharge policy but in reality very little money is recovered, and there are few legal options that the authority can take if a tenant is on benefits Incentives or a more punitive approach to be discussed by the group				Review recharge policy	COMPLETE
RR2	There should be liaison between the council and RSLs where people have caused damage to a property and/or have a debt to their previous landlord	Whatever is agreed needs to take account of VGC statutory duty - e.g. rehousing homeless families etc who may have caused damage or have rent arrears from a previous tenancy.					COMPLETE

	Tenant Involvement: suggestions for improvement	Vale response	LA named officers	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Resource	Progress
RTI1	<p>Tenant representatives should be involved in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - setting priorities for work - deciding what should be included in contracts eg whether contractors should have tenant liaison officers for large contracts - the process of choosing contractors for repairs and estate contracts eg grass cutting - monitoring meetings/ arrangements during contracts - mechanism to resolve problems during contracts 	<p>Will build in liaison on the capital programme</p> <p>There will be named liaison officers from property and housing who will be responsible for working with tenants in relation to external contracts.</p> <p>See earlier comments</p> <p>Will build in formal monitoring meetings with contractors</p> <p>Already established</p>	IW		SHORT	From within existing BM budgets	
RTI2	When funding is applied for – tenants should be consulted about priorities and be part of the process	Agreed - Future priorities will be based on stock condition survey but tenants will be involved in discussing findings etc.	IW		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
RTI3	Monitoring of repairs by tenants and how this will be done should be included in the Compact	The group needs to identify exactly what should be monitored	To be developed as part of discussion on repair priorities			No action at this time	

Standards and performance measures

Specific standards identified by the group in relation to day-to-day repairs and maintenance are:

- ✧ 24-hour category repairs to be carried out on the same day as they are reported, even at weekends
- ✧ council staff to show ID when calling at tenants homes
- ✧ recharges to be made where the council has to spend a lot of time to clean properties out. Transfers not to be given (by the council or housing associations) unless the property is in a decent state. The council to inspect a property before a transfer takes place, either within council properties or between landlords. This needs to link with lettings; offers of properties not to be made if an inspection has not taken place
- ✧ tenant representatives to be involved in setting priorities for work, specifying contracts and monitoring meetings during contracts
- ✧ tenant representatives to be involved in monitoring of repairs (some suggested performance measures are set out below)

Possible performance measures (at Council-wide and local levels) include:

- ✧ number of repairs of different priorities
- ✧ percentage of repairs for which appointments made
- ✧ percentage of appointments kept by contractors
- ✧ number/proportion of satisfaction slips returned
- ✧ levels of customer satisfaction indicated by returned satisfaction slips
- ✧ number/proportion of repairs completed within target times
- ✧ spend against budget
- ✧ number of times penalty clauses for contractors used and in what circumstances
- ✧ monetary value of repairs recharged to tenants and amount received in payments
- ✧ number of complaints received and for what reasons

Further performance measures may be identified as part of the discussion on repair priorities.

B PLANNED MAINTENANCE AND MAINTENANCE OF OPEN SPACES

A workshop looking at planned maintenance and maintenance of open spaces was held on 22nd November 2001. Discussions during the workshop focused on:

- ✧ large scale repairs and improvements carried out to homes and priorities for planned maintenance
- ✧ grass cutting, grounds maintenance and management of open spaces
- ✧ abandoned cars/vehicles
- ✧ graffiti/vandalism
- ✧ tenant involvement

Key issues raised by the group were that:

- ✧ there is insufficient planned maintenance and forward planning
- ✧ the standard of grounds maintenance is not high (a notable exception was Dinas Powys where the quality of grass cutting in Dinas Powys had improved significantly this year compared to last year)
- ✧ the current grass cutting policy relating to individuals can cause problems
- ✧ abandoned vehicles are not dealt with quickly enough (although recent improvements were noted in some areas)
- ✧ graffiti is not always removed quickly enough; where it was present on private properties, a mechanism is needed to remove it
- ✧ tenants want to be more involved in how priorities for planned maintenance are set
- ✧ tenants are keen to find a mechanism by which they can be involved in decision making processes with elected Members as well as with Officers (see Section 3 for suggestions on this)

ACTION PLAN: PLANNED MAINTENANCE AND THE MAINTENANCE OF OPEN SPACES

	Large Scale Repairs: Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
LSR 1	Increase the proportion of planned maintenance – tenants should be consulted about the detail of cyclical and planned maintenance	A stock condition survey is to be carried out during 2002 which will feed into a planned maintenance programme and the priorities attached to certain repairs	IW	Discuss findings when available	MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
LSR 2	A stock condition survey of all the Council's homes, needs to be prioritised and carried out quickly	A stock condition survey will be carried out during 2002 with some financial support from the National Assembly	IW		MEDIUM	Part WAG funded. VGC contribution approved and set aside	
LSR 3	Tenants representatives should be involved in drawing up the survey	The survey has to conform to the standard survey set out by the National Assembly. It was agreed that the group will see a copy of the survey questionnaire	IW				COMPLETE
LSR 4	Before the survey is carried out, the company that will be doing the survey should do familiarisation tours on estates with tenant representatives to identify key problems	Once the contract is awarded, tenant representatives will meet the contractors and make them aware of local issues and problems	IW				COMPLETE
LSR 5	Develop a planned maintenance programme informed by the results of the survey and with full tenant consultation	Agreed – will be done once survey results are complete – likely to be towards the end of 2002	IW		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
LSR 6	Council should have a note of particular problems/faults with design in different areas	This will be developed through the stock condition survey and the record of repairs reported for each property on the IT system	IW		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	

LSR 7	Provide clear information to all tenants about what is going to be done and when	Agreed – to be done once programme is established	IW		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
LSR 8	Some planned maintenance/improvements could be carried out when changes of tenancy take place – link to re-let standards	Agreed					COMPLETE

	<u>Grass Cutting and Grounds Maintenance:</u> Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
GCG M1	Having a map showing ownership of land across the Vale easily accessible to tenants and residents and good publicity to ensure that people know that this is available	Difficult to get a definitive position on ownership of land but will make progress on this	MI		MEDIUM	From within existing HCS budgets	
GCG M2	Having a grass-cutting contract that allows for some seasonal variation if the growing season is longer	Money for grass cutting comes from the responsive repairs budget and is limited – should the policy for carrying out grass cutting for pensioners be revised? Once repair priorities have been set, will look at these alongside budget and assess priority for grass cutting and shrubs/trees	MI PB		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
GCG M3	Ensuring that adequate equipment is available and gets used, eg machines to pick up/suck up grass cuttings	Ensuring this within existing budgets would reduce the amount of cuts by half in order to pay for picking up grass cuttings, resulting in a reduction in service for tenants.	PB to identify contract costs and implication		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
GCG M 4	Including cutting back shrubs and trees as necessary in the contract	This would have to come from existing budgets which would result in having to reduce some other areas of the grass cutting/gardening service. Will cut back where health and safety issues or a risk to property	MI		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
GCG M 5	Having a free phone telephone number for queries and complaints that will get people through to the right departments which are actually carrying out the work	See earlier comments on free phone numbers				Resource implications for free-phone not part of this study	

GCG M6	Producing better information for tenants as to which part of the council is responsible for which services	Directory of contacts to be provided to tenants	LC (tenants handbook)		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
		Clearer service level agreement with leisure to be developed	MI		LONG	No new resource implication	

	Abandoned Vehicles: Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
AV1	Recognition of the role of tenant groups in helping to find out who the owners of abandoned cars are	Currently tenants have ability to provide information via neighbour nuisance process. For legal purposes utilising residents boards could be problematic without evidence - could do it though via monitoring forms etc.	LC (tenants handbook) Community Estate Workers – pick up as part of work		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	COMPLETE
AV2	Providing an information pack for new tenants and those who are renting garages from the council as to what the expected standards are	Will be included in tenants handbook	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
AV3	Producing guidelines on the use of garages, i.e. not for storage or workshops	Looking to set specific standards for garages and their use. Garages are let on licences so it is relatively easy to get possession. Include standards in handbook	MI Community Estate Workers – regular inspection	Feed into standards	MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
AV4	Having and implementing a policy that the first priority for garages should be tenants living on the same estate	This would work against Councils equality principles.	No action required				COMPLETE

	Graffiti/Vandalism: Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
GV1	Using new legislation to enable the council to act to remove graffiti from privately owned walls/properties	Will use new legislation through an analysis of what we can and cannot do and will consult with residents to develop this element.	NJS	Provide input	MEDIUM	Subject to Cabinet approval	
GV2	Consistently implementing the policy on removal of graffiti	Will establish standards Campaigns to target graffiti like that held on Gibbonsdown can be carried out in other areas	MI LC (tenants handbook)	Provide input into standards	MEDIUM	No new resource implication £4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	

	Tenant Involvement: Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
PMTI 1	Tenants to receive information about planned and cyclical maintenance to be carried out in their area. This information could be fed into existing tenant and resident association newsletters	Agreed	IW		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
PMTI 2	Tenant representatives should be involved each year in drawing up the priorities for planned maintenance and amending the plan as necessary	Agreed – However, ultimately this will be subject to cabinet approval and results of stock condition survey.	IW	Input into priorities	MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
PMTI 3	Tenants groups should receive details of the budget for planned maintenance – for the whole of the Vale and for their individual areas	Based on stock condition survey findings which will determine priorities	IW		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	
PMTI 4	Tenant representatives should regularly meet the contractors who are actually responsible for carrying out the work on estates	Agreed			ONGOING	No new resource implication	
PMTI 5	Tenant representatives should be involved in putting together Service Level Agreements between the housing department and other departments. The Service Level Agreements should include quality targets and the role of tenant representatives in monitoring the service and its quality	Agreed in principle but we will need to develop this element further to be clear about what we can and cannot not do. Review of any SLA or new SLAs about services provided on estates/to tenants – tenant reps will be consulted	Information to be included within monitoring meetings Linked to handbook LC	Provide input	ONGOING MEDIUM	No new resource implication £4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	

Standards and performance measures

Specific standards identified by the group in relation to planned maintenance and the maintenance of open spaces are:

- ◇ tenants to receive regular information about planned and cyclical maintenance to be carried out in their area, telling them what will happen and when
- ◇ pensioners and disabled people should have their grass cut. The group came up with 3 options:
 - * grass should be cut automatically for all pensioners and disabled people, without them having to make an application
 - * grass should be cut for all pensioners and disabled people if they make an application. This would be a once only application, not one each year
 - * grass should be cut for all pensioners and disabled people unless they make an application to opt out

Possible performance measures (at Council-wide and local levels) include:

- ◇ proportion of planned maintenance compared to day-to-day maintenance
- ◇ time taken to remove abandoned cars once reported
- ◇ time taken to remove graffiti once reported
- ◇ levels of customer satisfaction
- ◇ number of complaints received and for what reasons

C ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, NUISANCE AND CRIME

A workshop looking at anti-social behaviour, nuisance and crime was held on 3rd December 2001. Discussions during the workshop focused on:

- ✧ anti-social behaviour
- ✧ crime on estates and the use of CCTV
- ✧ responses to anti-social behaviour

Key issues raised by the group were that:

- ✧ it is not always clear what organisation or department within the Council can do what in relation to anti-social behaviour, nuisance and crime
- ✧ it is not clear what organisations have which powers and how these can be used in different circumstances
- ✧ the profile of environmental health appears low to tenant and resident representatives
- ✧ reporting anti-social behaviour after hours can be problematic
- ✧ experience of estate-based CCTV has been positive
- ✧ the new staffing structure is positive, particularly the Community Estate Worker posts (however, there is a concern that their remit may be too wide for them to be effective)
- ✧ a range of responses to anti-social behaviour are needed including a strengthened tenancy agreement, mediation, introductory tenancies and better joint working between organisations

ACTION PLAN: ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, NUISANCE AND CRIME

	<u>Anti-Social Behaviour:</u> Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
ASB 1	A nuisance hotline (0800) including someone who can call out after hours where clearly needed	A review of out of hours services provided by the council is being carried out during 2002-03. Ideas from this group will be fed into the review	NJS		MEDIUM	Resource implication for free-phone not part of this study	
ASB 2	Tenant representatives and individual tenants need to know telephone numbers for eg the different parts of the council responsible for dealing with different types of nuisance, community police etc	The council will provide tenants with a contact sheet to identify which agency deals with which aspect of anti-social behaviour/nuisance – with contact names and telephone nos.	LC (part of tenants handbook)		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
ASB 3	Tenant representatives have a role in determining the overall lettings policy and local lettings policies with the aims of achieving balanced and sustainable communities	Would like to aim for more balanced communities but there are constraints such as having to rehouse households accepted as homeless, which have been made worse under the recent NAFW legislation on homelessness					COMPLETE
ASB 4	There should be free large item collection or a skip service – the skips could be provided during daytime only	Possible ideas to take forward – households coming together to have 5 items for collection so that the charge can be shared. Skips for some areas if that is what residents want. The council will produce a list of options for consideration by the group	MI	Comment on options	MEDIUM	From within existing HCS budgets if this service is feasible	

ASB 5	<p>Local youth services need to be improved and young people talked to, to find out what they want in order to do this</p> <p>The implementation of the laws on selling alcohol and cigarettes to young people should be tightened up – trading standards have a role to play here</p>	<p>Areas that the group have come up with that fall outside of housing's remit have been identified – these can be dealt with by appropriate tenants and residents groups</p>		<p>Appropriate tenants and residents groups to discuss</p>			COMPLETE
ASB 6	<p>Tenants and residents have a role in fighting for appropriate facilities for young people</p> <p>Tenant and resident groups could hold sessions focused on involving young people and what resources are needed – this needs to link to the Vale Youth Forum</p>	<p>Appropriate tenants and residents groups to hold meetings with the police, education, youth services and housing to discuss way forward</p>		<p>Appropriate tenants and residents groups</p>			COMPLETE
ASB 7	<p>More support workers are needed to help people sustain their tenancies</p>	<p>This is a council priority – they are seeking to get more money for support workers for homeless people and others</p>	NJS		MEDIUM	<p>Being dealt with under Supporting People Tenant Support Contracts which are funded by Transitional HB</p>	

ASB 8	Tenants and residents associations have a role in defining the role of Community Estate Workers on particular estates/in different areas – different emphases may be needed in different areas. Representatives should be involved in developing job descriptions/recruitment/liaison meetings/establishing work plan priorities	<p>The job descriptions are already established and the workers recruited. Corporate recruitment policies have to be followed.</p> <p>The Community Estate Workers will liaise with Resident Boards on an ongoing basis</p> <p>Council to provide the group with a summary of the responsibilities of all housing staff, particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Estate Workers - Estate Rangers - Housing Assistants 	LC/EW LC/EW	Involved in liaison meetings	SHORT SHORT	No new resource implication No new resource implication	COMPLETE
ASB 9	The Federation has a role in bringing the Community Estate Workers together	The Community Estate Workers meet as part of their work – they will liase with resident boards as above.	LC/EW			No new resource implication	ONGOING

	<u>Crime on Estates and use of CCTV:</u> Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
CCT V1	More CCTV cameras are needed in hotspots. Consultation with local groups is needed to identify best location for cameras. Need to ensure any relevant funding is accessed by the council	There are 2 types of CCTV: - town centre – high quality funded by the Home Office - estate based – lower quality funded from maintenance budget There are limited resources available to extend existing coverage of estate based CCTV.				Revenue & capital funding required for any expansion of the service	ONGOING
		Some areas may get funding through specific routes eg Gibbonsdown CCTV has obtained capital funding under Communities First – this could be evaluated to inform future policy for CCTV on estates.		Involvement in Gibbons-down pilot initiative	ONGOING	Revenue & capital funding required for any expansion of the service	ONGOING
CCT V2	Information should be made available about what to do if there is a problem between tenants and owners or private renters	The council will provide tenant representatives with a contact sheet to identify which agency deals with which aspect of anti-social behaviour/nuisance – with contact names and telephone nos. Details also to go in tenants handbook.	NJS		SHORT	No new resource implications	
CCT V	Local tenant representatives should be able to get onto the Police Authority	This is an issue for tenants and residents groups		Tenants and residents groups			COMPLETE
CCT V	The role of tenants/residents associations needs clarifying and building into the 8 step policy	Need to clarify – if a tenant approaches a Resident Board with a complaint about nuisance, refer them on to the right place (see above) Role = listening and advice on where to go with complaint	No action required				COMPLETE

	Responses to Anti-Social Behaviour: Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
RAS B1	Strengthen tenancy agreement – yes, but only if tenancy conditions are enforced	If the tenancy agreement is strengthened, the intention would be to enforce it Terms and conditions of tenancy to be included in handbook	NJS LC		MEDIUM MEDIUM	No new resource implication £4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
RAS B2	Mediation – need to learn from other mediation services, how they have been set up and where they have got funding from eg Rhondda Cynon Taff. The Vale Federation has a key role as an equal partner in the setting up of the mediation service	Looking to develop an independent mediation service providing opportunities for tenants and residents to become trained mediators. Tenant and resident representatives confirmed that they would like this opportunity Research options for mediation	 IW	To be discussed by appropriate tenants and residents groups	ONGOING MEDIUM	From within existing HCS budgets & subject of Cabinet approval	
RAS B3	Introductory tenancies – yes, but need to ensure that tenants actually move in during the first part of the tenancy. An example was given from another authority where people did not move in during the introductory part of the tenancy so their actual behaviour was not known	If representatives know that tenants have not moved in – they need to inform the council – however, it is difficult to do much about it as case law says that tenants can live elsewhere as long as they have the intention to move back Report on introductory tenancies will be considered by the council	NJS		SHORT	No new resource implication	
RAS B4	More proactive use of ASBOs needed – this needs to be worked up with residents groups and individual tenants	This is being progressed. The council will consult with Residents Boards on the framework for using ASBOs. The police are currently looking to use ASBOs	NJS		ONGOING	From within existing HCS budgets if this service is feasible	

RAS B5	Professional witnesses should be used where appropriate	<p>Community Estate Workers can act in this capacity – they have digital cameras to record problems – as these workers don't work out of hours – the Council is looking at joint work with the police to cover out of hours</p> <p>In-house witness taking course</p> <p>Monitoring reports</p>	<p>LC/EW</p> <p>LC/EW</p>		<p>MEDIUM</p> <p>MEDIUM</p>	<p>From within existing HCS budgets</p> <p>No new resource implication</p>	COMPLETE
RAS B6	Local tenants/residents groups should feed into the Crime & Safety Partnership – the Monmouthshire Red Pop model – local groups looking at operational issues that feed into strategic partnership	<p>In principle Resident Boards and housing associations should be represented. Previous experience of representatives was that meetings were formal and intimidating – the partnership needs breaking down into local areas looking at practical issues. A way forward is needed</p> <p>Attend meeting of Forum to discuss and review input of Residents Boards to the Crime and Safety Partnership</p>	Christine Pike	Appropriate tenants and residents groups	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>SHORT</p>	<p>No new resource implication</p>	COMPLETE

Standards and performance measures

Specific standards identified by the group in relation to anti-social behaviour, nuisance and crime are:

- ✧ tenants/residents to have clear information about the remedies available to tackle anti-social behaviour and the responsibilities of the different local authority departments and other organisations
- ✧ tenants/residents to have clear contact information for departments/organisations and in what circumstances they can be contacted
- ✧ strengthened tenancy agreement in place
- ✧ availability of mediation service
- ✧ introductory tenancies in place
- ✧ involvement of tenant/resident representatives in Crime & Safety Partnership

Possible performance measures (at Council-wide and local levels) include:

- ✧ levels of tenant satisfaction with council response to complaints of anti-social behaviour
- ✧ number of complaints received and for what reasons

D LETTING PROPERTIES

A workshop looking at the letting of properties was held on 21st January 2002. Discussion during the workshop focused on:

- ✧ re-let standards
- ✧ the lettings process

Key issues raised by the group were that:

- ✧ current re-let standards are a problem
- ✧ lettings do not take into account the quality of life of existing residents
- ✧ insufficient choice is made available to applicants
- ✧ area of choice is very important to applicants
- ✧ mixing lifestyles, particularly in blocks of flats, doesn't work

ACTION PLAN: LETTINGS

	<u>Lettings:</u> Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
L1	Re-let standards drafted by the group	The council will use these standards as the basis for Building Services developing the re-let standard	MP	Comment on draft	SHORT		COMPLETE
L2	New tenants should get information about residents associations, with contact numbers, a copy of the latest RA magazine etc. This could be incorporated in the tenants handbook. New tenants should also get information about their local Councillors i.e. the people there to represent them	The council wants to work with tenants to develop a tenants handbook/information pack for tenants to include general information and area specific information The council are prepared to pay for Rowan to provide advice and help to develop the handbook if tenants would like this	LC Rowan to be involved	Involved in handbook project	MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
L3	Application forms should clearly allow people to say which areas they would like and the policy should mean that this is taken notice of	Already do this – with the exception of homeless households – for them suitable accommodation is anywhere within the Vale					COMPLETE
L4	The lettings policy should be aiming for balanced communities – looking at child density etc	The council will put a bid into the Assembly for money to do some work on this. The bid will address all the rest of the ideas on this page. Tenant/resident representatives expressed positive support for the bid.	NJS		LONG	WAG grant for LAMP project & VGC match funding approved	
L5	The policy should include more choice i.e. more than 2 offers	Council's preference is to concentrate on getting people to identify their areas of choice accurately on the application form Increasing choice could mean properties empty for longer periods and longer waiting lists					COMPLETE

L6	People with young children shouldn't be offered flats, or properties where there is no garden	Agreed but the reality is that sometimes this has to happen Single people can be considered for 2 bed flats	Cannot be changed due to pressures				COMPLETE
L7	Older persons accommodation should be re-designated to allow people over 50 in upstairs flats. Older persons accommodation could be completely re-designated if people currently living there could be persuaded to move	Already do 55+ - could consider going down to 50 but need to be sensitive Agreed	NJS (linked to Assembly bid)		LONG	WAG grant for LAMP project & VGC match funding approved	
L8	Developments in IT were questioned as to how much money they could cost in relation to possible benefits	IT developments being considered would not cost much but focus on using what already exists more effectively eg handheld computers to use during home visits, advertising on the website	NJS		MEDIUM	Met from existing HCS budget	
L9	Exit and entrance surveys thought to be a good idea but not general surveys of attitudes	See above comment on a bid to the National Assembly	NJS		LONG	WAG grant for LAMP project & VGC match funding approved	
L10	Residents Association representatives to be involved in inspecting empty properties (if they wish) but not in lettings themselves	Agreed – inspecting a sample of properties before they are let	MI LC EW	Involvement as wished	MEDIUM (linked to introduction of re-let standard)	No new resource implication	
L11	Representatives to be involved in setting and monitoring re-let standards (as set out above)	Agreed – use the groups re-let standard as the basis for this		Comment on second draft and involvement in monitoring			COMPLETE

Standards and performance measures

Re-let standards suggested by the group

The starting point for property inspection should be 'would you live in it?'

- ✧ Viewing should allow the potential tenant to adequately see the condition of the property eg perforated screens which let in light, proper lighting if not
- ✧ Essential health and safety issues – the group would like a complete list of what these actually are
- ✧ Remove rubbish from house and garden (garden within a week of the new tenant moving in)
- ✧ The property should be clean, particularly kitchen and bathroom (including fumigation where necessary)
- ✧ Decoration – the property should be prepared for decoration, with decoration vouchers given according to the condition of the property. A pack of brushes/rollers etc could be provided if the council can get these cheaply
- ✧ Flooring – tiles matching, old carpet edging etc removed
- ✧ Plumbing, heating, fires and electric's should be tested – sockets should work
- ✧ Instructions for appliances should be available plus the date when last serviced
- ✧ Kitchen – adequate cupboards, cupboard doors work, shelves unbroken
- ✧ Bathroom – mastic around bath, bath plug, basin and toilet uncracked, toilet seat
- ✧ Doors – have handles and hung properly
- ✧ Garden – fencing and gates secure
- ✧ Communal areas – moss removed from pathways in older persons accommodation, outside lighting working

It was also suggested that properties should have a welcome pack that includes bin liners, the tenants handbook, phone numbers for repairs etc and contact details for the local residents association.

Representatives to be involved in monitoring the re-let standards once they are in place.

Possible performance measures (at Council-wide and local levels) include:

number/proportion of properties meeting re-let standard

levels of satisfaction of new tenants with property moved in to

number of complaints received and for what reasons

E RENT COLLECTION AND RENT ARREARS

A workshop looking at rent collection and rent arrears was held on 31st January 2002. Discussion during the workshop focused on:

- ✧ how the council responds when someone gets into rent arrears
- ✧ housing benefit issues

Key issues raised by the group were that:

- ✧ information about how much rent people need to pay when they are on Housing Benefit and their circumstances change takes a long time to come through and people can end up in arrears through no fault of their own (changes in non-dependent deductions were given as an example)
- ✧ local places/offices to pay rent are needed
- ✧ sending the first letter notifying people that they are in arrears at 2 weeks arrears was felt to be about right
- ✧ arrears letters are sometimes sent in error
- ✧ the council were generally felt to be sympathetic in their approach to arrears
- ✧ Residents Boards would like to play a greater role in monitoring of rent arrears for their areas

ACTION PLAN: RENT COLLECTION AND RENT ARREARS

	<u>Rent Collection and Rent Arrears:</u> Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
R1	Better information for tenants about what Housing Benefit covers and what it doesn't i.e. not water rates	Include in tenants handbook/information pack, newsletters etc	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
R2	Tenants to be able to request a rent statement at any time	Tenants can and do-do this – need to emphasise this in handbook and newsletters	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
R3	Local offices for payment of rent can bring arrears down – bring them back, even if only part-time. Gibbonsdown – re-open area office or explore what would need to be changed to enable the use of the Resident Board office for payment of rent	Ongoing situation – it is a priority for the council to reinstate services to the area office	IW		MEDIUM	Met from within existing HCS budget	
R4	Council needs to identify people in Housing Benefit arrears and establish a separate procedure for them – should then liaise with HB to get the arrears cleared	Already do this					COMPLETE
R5	All letters should include an offer for an officer to call out and discuss the reasons for arrears Officers to visit within a set number of days of letter A being sent to negotiate and sign an agreement (number to be agreed)	The council doesn't have the resources to carry out visits for every arrears letter A sent out – too many. However, when the policy is reviewed, will look to include a visit as a formal stage of the policy	MI JB	Provide views on draft revised policy	MEDIUM	Met from within existing HCS budget	

R6	There shouldn't be a set number of weeks arrears before a NSP is issued – need flexibility to deal with individual cases	However, policy needs to be administered on equality basis	Cannot change				COMPLETE
R7	Encourage tenants to have HB paid direct to the council	Not relevant – already happens automatically for LA tenants (not RSL tenants)					
R8	Put HB back in housing management as it is a key part of the service to help tenants prevent and manage arrears	Need evidence that current system is not working well to make the argument to change current structure. Existing arrangements need to be evaluated	IW		MEDIUM	No new resource implication & subject to Cabinet approval	
R9	Resident Board contact details to be included in tenants handbook	Agreed	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
R10	Resident Boards to have information about specialist agencies that may be able to help people eg credit union, CAB, debt counseling	Agreed – information pack/tenants handbook	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
R11	Set up a Vale debt advice helpline (free phone) – C&C Swansea have one	The Vale currently funds the Money Advice Unit – details need to go in the tenants handbook and newsletters	LC (Tenants handbook)		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
R12	Residents Boards to have copies of the standard letters and details of when they are sent to people who get into arrears	Agreed	MI		SHORT	No new resource implication	

R13	Consult local people about payment methods and convenient places to pay	Will include when rent arrears policy reviewed Include information in handbook	MI JB LC	Provide views	MEDIUM	No new resource implication £4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
R14	Monitoring information on a geographical area basis – related to areas of Residents Boards – every six months: - Percentage of people in arrears - Amount collected compared to amount collectable - How much arrears down to HB - Numbers of NSPs issued, court cases, actual evictions - Length of time from eviction to re-letting of property	Agreed – can do all except how much arrears are down to HB as this information is constantly changing	MI JB		MEDIUM	No new resource implications	

Standards and performance measures

Specific standards identified by the group in relation to rent collection and rent arrears are:

- ✧ clear information to all tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit as to what HB covers
- ✧ tenants to be able to request a rent statement at any time
- ✧ local offices available for payment of rent
- ✧ visit to tenants in arrears as part of formal policy
- ✧ consultation with tenants about payment methods and convenient places to pay

Possible performance measures (at Council-wide and local levels) include:

- ✧ percentage of people in arrears
- ✧ amount collected compared to amount collectable
- ✧ how much arrears down to HB
- ✧ numbers of NSPs issued, court cases, actual evictions
- ✧ length of time from eviction to re-letting of property
- ✧ levels of tenant satisfaction
- ✧ number of complaints received and for what reasons

F TENANCY MATTERS

A workshop looking at tenancy matters was held on 21st February 2002. Discussion during the workshop focused on:

- ◇ the tenancy agreement
- ◇ changes in tenancy
- ◇ tenants handbook

Key issues raised by the group were that:

- ◇ many tenants don't read/clearly understand their tenancy agreements so don't know their rights and responsibilities
- ◇ the tenancy agreement needs reviewing with input from tenant representatives
- ◇ changes of tenancy and their implications (from joint to single etc) need clear explanation
- ◇ a tenants handbook is a priority
- ◇ when tenants have to move because of large scale repairs being carried out on their homes – the Council is sympathetic

ACTION PLAN: TENANCY MATTERS

	Tenancy Matters: Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
TM1	Review the tenancy agreement with input from tenant representatives	Agreed. This review should include what format the tenancy agreement should be available in eg different languages, on tape etc	NJS		LONG	WAG grant for LAMP project & VGC match funding approved	
TM2	A tenants handbook is a priority – needs to include information on the council insurance scheme with advice for tenants to get 2/3 quotes so that they know if they are getting a good deal	Agreed – tenants handbook project to start in May – the council will pay travel expenses for tenants and for lunches at the meetings. Leigh Caveney will be the lead council officer for this project	LC	Full input	MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTFRP	
TM3	Potential tenants should get a copy of the tenancy agreement 24 hours before they are expected to sign up so that they have a chance to read it	Agreed – a copy of the tenancy agreement should be included in the offer letter Tenancy agreement also explained at viewing	LC/EW LC/EW		MEDIUM MEDIUM	No new resource implication No new resource implication	
TM4	Need to explain clearly what happens when tenants exchange eg house taken as seen	This information is explained to tenants at the moment but perhaps should go in the tenants handbook and the Annual Report to Tenants to reinforce the message Vale Works standards to be included in handbook	LC JM		MEDIUM MEDIUM	Met from within existing HCS budget £4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTFRP	

TM5	<p>Second successions. It was felt these should be allowable in certain circumstances, and that the Council needs to exercise flexibility and sensitivity. Criteria of exceptional circumstances and guidelines should be built into the policy. Where there is under-occupation after succession, tenants should be offered the option to move to a smaller property, but not be required to</p> <p>Need tenant involvement in drawing up guidelines on discretionary second and third successions eg for adult children who have lived in the property all their life</p>	<p>Second successions are not legal. The policy means that situations cannot be dealt with on a case-by-case basis but various situations need to be included in the allocations policy – this will be included in the review of the allocations policy in which tenants will be involved.</p> <p>Tenant representatives will be involved in reviewing the allocations policy</p>	NJS		LONG	WAG grant for LAMP project & VGC match funding approved	COMPLETE
TM6	Change of tenancy eg from single to joint, from joint to single – clarification needed on what this means eg if this change constitutes succession	Include in the tenants handbook	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
TM7	Tenant involvement in reviewing the tenancy agreement	Agreed	NJS		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	

Standards and performance measures

Specific standards identified by the group in relation to tenancy matters are:

- ✧ tenants handbook available to all tenants
- ✧ potential tenants to receive tenancy agreement with offer letter
- ✧ revised tenancy agreement with tenant representative input

Possible performance measures (at Council-wide and local levels) include:

- ✧ levels of tenant satisfaction
- ✧ number of complaints received and for what reasons

G CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES

A workshop looking at changing circumstances was held on 4th March 2002. Discussion during the workshop focused on:

- ◇ Right to Buy and leaseholders
- ◇ Sheltered housing
- ◇ Supporting People
- ◇ Lifetime Homes
- ◇ Leaving tenancies
- ◇ Tenant Involvement

Key issues raised by the group were that:

- ◇ many tenants don't read/clearly understand their tenancy agreements so don't know their rights and responsibilities
- ◇ the tenancy agreement needs reviewing with input from tenant representatives
- ◇ changes of tenancy and their implications (from joint to single etc) need clear explanation
- ◇ a tenants handbook is a priority
- ◇ when tenants have to move because of large scale repairs being carried out on their homes – the Council is sympathetic

ACTION PLAN: CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES

	<u>Right to Buy:</u> Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
RTB 1	Tenants would like information about how much money is generated by Right to Buy and how it gets spent – each year	Will include in the Annual Report to Tenants	EW (write article) JD		ANNUALLY	No new resource implication	
RTB 2	How much do leaseholders contribute to major repairs, what it covers and how much has been spent over the last year – divided down into areas?	The council charge a fee for managing the lease, maintenance of communal areas, buildings insurance and a charge for major repairs Not sure if this information can be provided – will find out Will look into options for reducing the fee for Harbour View and Royal Close – will look at this with the Residents Board	IW		MEDIUM	Subject to approval of Cabinet	
RTB 3	Criteria of when council will/can buy back Right to Buy properties – clearly set out	Don't buy RTB properties back – only exception is Harbour View and Royal Close Will include this information in the Annual Report to Tenants/handbook	EW LC		ANNUALLY MEDIUM	Met from existing HCS budget	
RTB 4	Clarification of what discount has to be paid back if sell properties within a short time of buying	Include in the tenants handbook	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
RTB 5	Clarification of what types of property cannot be bought under Right to Buy	Include in the tenants handbook	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	

RTB 6	What happens if someone buys a council property and then cannot sell it because it is of faulty construction	This should be picked up by a survey at the time of purchase. Information to be included in the tenants handbook about this and referring to National Assembly guidance	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	COMPLETE
RTB 7	Clarification of when money is available from the National Assembly to help Right to Buy owners and in what circumstances		MI		MEDIUM	No new resource implication	

	Sheltered Housing: Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
SH1	Residents need to know what can be expected of the warden eg job description and definition of role	This information to be included in a sheltered housing section of the tenants handbook	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
SH2	Wardens need to be supported by the council and have supervision – residents should know the arrangements for support and supervision	Supervision does take place – once a fortnight and wardens attend area team meetings. A new supervision and management policy is being introduced in housing to include identification of training needs					COMPLETE
SH3	Training for wardens needs to include tenant participation/ involvement	Agreed	All supervisors & managers		ONGOING	No new resource implication	
SH4	Make sure people living in sheltered housing know their general rights eg warden not able to just come into their flats without permission, and right to participate/get involved	Agreed – include in tenants handbook	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
SH5	Residents should know what they can expect from the VCAS service, particularly in the case of emergencies eg when fire alarms go off when the warden is not on duty/at the scheme	Agreed – include in tenants handbook	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
SH6	Paths eg going to clothes lines and in communal garden areas should be cleared of moss and treated to prevent regrowth each year	Agreed – review of standards will include this in the specification – will come back to Forum	MI PB		MEDIUM	Met from existing HCS/BM budgets	

SH7	Include a separate section for sheltered housing in the tenants handbook covering all relevant issues	Agreed	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
SH8	Standards for sheltered accommodation should include adequate heating and grab rails in bathrooms plus facility for a shower	Properties are let as they are – adaptations can be carried out for individuals.		DFGs to go on agenda of appropriate tenants and residents groups			COMPLETE
SH9	Sheltered housing issues to be discussed by appropriate tenants and residents groups	Agreed – but needs input from all other landlords to be effective – cannot be Council alone		Sheltered housing to go on agenda of appropriate tenants and residents groups			COMPLETE
SH 10	Could have a special day on sheltered housing including training	Agreed – but needs input from all other landlords to be effective – cannot be Council alone		Appropriate tenants and residents groups to organise			COMPLETE

	<u>Supporting People/Lifetime Homes:</u> Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
SPL H1	Telephone numbers for Samaritans, the police etc, to go into tenants handbook – for people to use when there are problems with people not getting the support they need to live independently	Agreed	LC		MEDIUM	£4,000 set aside in HRA as part of ongoing BVTPRP	
SPL H2	Could involve the Disability Forum in checking out adapted properties to ensure that they are suitable for disabled people	Agreed Tenants and residents groups might like to have someone to talk about what Lifetime Homes means in practice (from National Assembly)	NJS	Tenants and residents groups agenda item			COMPLETE

	<u>Leaving Tenancies:</u> Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
LT1	Carry out inspection before tenants move out	Agreed – links to introduction of relet standard	LC EW JM		MEDIUM	Met from within existing HCS/BM budget	
LT2	Bonus/incentive for people leaving their properties in good repair	No problem in principle but cost would come from repairs budget – need a policy. The council will have a look at the options and bring them to the Forum for discussion	NJS JM		MEDIUM	Subject to Cabinet Approval & would be a resource implication if approved	

	Tenant Involvement: Suggestion for improvement	Vale response	LA (named officers)	Council Resident Board reps	Timescale	Financial & Resource Implication	Progress
CCTI 1	There should be regular contact/meetings between the council and sheltered housing tenants to make sure they are able to participate	Agreed. The Community Estate Workers have established surgeries during their visits to sheltered schemes	LC EW		SHORT	No new resource implication	

Standards and performance measures

Specific standards identified by the group in relation to sheltered housing are:

- ✧ sheltered housing residents to know what is expected of the warden
- ✧ sheltered housing residents to know what can be expected of piper alarm service
- ✧ paths eg going to clothes lines and in communal garden areas should be cleared of moss and treated to prevent regrowth each year
- ✧ standards for sheltered accommodation should include adequate heating and grab rails in bathrooms plus facility for a shower
- ✧ regular contact meetings between the Council and sheltered housing tenants

Specific standards identified by the group in relation to leaving tenancies are:

- ✧ an inspection to be carried out before tenants leave

Possible performance measures (at Council-wide and local levels) include:

- ✧ proportion of sheltered housing properties meeting standards set
- ✧ number of meetings between the Council and sheltered housing tenants
- ✧ proportion of inspections carried out compared to number of tenants leaving
- ✧ levels of tenant satisfaction
- ✧ number of complaints received and for what reasons

SECTION THREE: ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Tenant and resident discussions which took place during the nine workshops and three feedback sessions held during the project, have highlighted a wide range of ideas for improvement of the Vale's housing management and maintenance services. Discussions have also identified ideas for improving current and future tenant involvement. However, it is important that the wider body of tenants will also have an opportunity to be consulted on these ideas and have their views taken into account.

This section draws out a number of key issues:

- A Issues which need to be considered as part of the first review of the Vale's local and Borough wide tenant participation compacts
- B Issues which need to be considered for inclusion in the Vale's handbook for tenants
- C Issues which need to be considered by the appropriate tenant and resident groups, as either having implications for all tenants and residents living in the Vale, or that need to involve organisations other than the Council
- D Issues which need to be considered by the recently formed Vale Council Residents Forum

A ISSUES WHICH NEED TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN THE COMPACTS ARE REVIEWED

The following points for tenant involvement in the Vale's services were identified by tenant and resident representatives, and agreed by Vale officers during the project. These will need to be included in the Compacts when they are reviewed later in 2002. The points could either be incorporated into the main text of the compacts, or could be added as a series of Appendices at the back.

Tenant involvement in the repairs and maintenance service

Training

Tenant representatives will have the opportunity to be involved in customer care training for staff who answer the phone to take repair orders

Information

Tenant representatives will receive regular (*how often?*) information about repairs performance and budgets

Monitoring

There will be an annual review with tenant and resident reps and officers to highlight maintenance problems

There will be a fundamental review of the total maintenance service with tenant & resident reps every *(how often?)* years

Tenant representatives and officers will have regular three monthly meetings to monitor performance. This will include consultation on reviewing any Service Level Agreements between the Housing and Community Safety Divisions and other council services. *(The details of this will be developed as part of discussions on repair priorities)*

Planned maintenance and large-scale repairs

Tenant representatives will be consulted about the planned maintenance programme which will be developed when the Stock Condition Survey is completed.

Tenant representatives will receive the annual planned maintenance budget, both for the whole Vale area and for their local areas.

Tenant representatives will be involved each year in drawing up the priorities for planned maintenance.

Resident Boards, and all individual tenants, will receive information about planned and cyclical maintenance to be carried out in their area, together with timescales for the work. This will be publicised in existing local tenants' newsletters

Contractors

There will be a review of the Council's code of conduct for contractors with tenant and resident representatives every *(how often?)* years

The Council will provide named liaison officers from property and housing, who will be responsible for working with tenants in relation to external contracts

Tenant representatives will be involved in drawing up contracts and will meet contractors

Tenant representatives will take part in regular monitoring meetings with contractors during contracts

Tenant involvement in issues concerning anti social behaviour, lettings and rent arrears

Anti social behaviour

Community Estate Workers will liaise with the Residents' Boards on an ongoing basis at least monthly.

Residents' Boards will be provided with a summary of the responsibility of all housing staff, particularly:

- ◇ Community estate workers
- ◇ Estate rangers
- ◇ Housing assistants

Lettings

Residents Board representatives will be involved in the inspection of a sample of properties in their area before they are let. The numbers and frequency of inspections will be agreed with individual Residents' Boards.

Residents Board representatives will be involved in setting and monitoring relet standards.

Rent Arrears

Residents Boards will be consulted about the review of rent arrears policies, including monitoring.

Residents' Boards will receive information every six months, relating to their geographical area on:

- ◇ Percentage of people in arrears
- ◇ Amount collected compared to amount collectable
- ◇ Numbers of NSPs issued, court cases and evictions
- ◇ Length of time from eviction to letting property

Tenant involvement in tenancy matters and changing circumstances

Residents Boards will be involved in reviewing the allocations policy

Residents Boards will be involved in reviewing the tenancy agreement

Sheltered Housing

Regular contact meetings will be held between the Council and sheltered housing tenants to enable them to participate. Community Estate Workers will be holding monthly surgeries during their visits to sheltered schemes.

B ISSUES WHICH NEED TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN THE TENANTS' HANDBOOK IS DEVELOPED

The following points were identified during the discussion groups for inclusion in the tenants' handbook:

Repairs and Maintenance

A summary of the maintenance toolkit for residents' groups and staff

A summary of the repairs schedule

Examples of the costs of repairs and relevant hourly rates

A directory of Council contacts, giving information on which part of the Council is responsible for which services

Information on the role of Residents' Boards in helping to find out who owns abandoned cars

Information on the accepted use of, and expected standards for renting council garages

Information about Residents' Boards, with contact numbers.

Information about local Councillors and contact numbers.

Anti social behaviour, lettings and rent arrears

Information on which agency deals with which aspect of anti-social behaviour/nuisance, with their contact names and phone numbers

Information on specialist agencies that may be able to help people, for example, credit unions, CAB, debt counseling, Vale Money Advice Unit

Information for tenants about what Housing Benefit does and does not cover. For example water rates.

Information explaining that tenants are able to request a rent statement at any time.

Tenancy matters

Information on the council insurance scheme with advice for tenants to get two or three quotes so that they know if they are getting a good deal

An explanation of what happens when tenants exchange, for example, that they must take the house as seen

Vale works standards to be included in the handbook

An explanation of how a change of tenancy, for example from single to joint or joint may constitute succession

Information on the amount of discount has to be paid back if someone sells their property within a short time of buying it from the Council

Information on the types of property that cannot be bought under Right to Buy

An explanation of what happens if someone buys a council property, and then cannot sell it because it is of faulty construction. The explanation needs to refer to the National Assembly guidance and to include a recommendation that a specialist survey be carried out before purchase

Sheltered housing

It was agreed that the tenants' handbook should include a specific section for sheltered housing tenants. This section will need to include information on:

What sheltered housing tenants can expect of a warden. A typical job description and definition of their role should be included

People's general and tenancy rights, especially their right to participate and to have privacy in their home (e.g. that tenants do not have to let the warden in if they don't want to)

What can be expected from the Vale Community Alarm Service, particularly in the case of emergencies, for example when fire alarms go off when the warden is not on duty or is away from the building

General Information and useful contacts

General information on useful contacts and organisations, including contact details of all housing association landlords with properties in the area.

C ISSUES IDENTIFIED AS EITHER HAVING IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL TENANTS AND RESIDENTS LIVING IN THE VALE, OR AS ISSUES WHICH NEED TO INVOLVE ORGANISATIONS OTHER THAN THE COUNCIL

The following points have been identified in the course of the discussion workshops as either having implications for all tenants and residents throughout the Vale, or as issues which need to involve other organisations. Action will be needed on the following by the appropriate tenants and residents groups at local and/or Vale-wide levels.

Improving Youth Services

Improve local youth services, and talk to young people to find out what they want in order to do this.

Ensure that the laws on selling alcohol and cigarettes to young people are implemented and tightened up. It is suggested that the Trading Standards Office be contacted about this.

Improving Police Liaison

The previous experiences of residents who attended the Crime and Safety Partnership was that meetings were formal, intimidating and did not address local issues. Tenants and resident representatives may like to consider approaching the Police Authority to seek a way forward to enabling local tenant representatives to take part and give their view, and also look at the Monmouthshire Red Pop model (*see Appendix 1 of this report*)

Developing a Mediation Service

Consider working with other relevant organisations, to develop an independent mediation service which can provide opportunities for tenants and residents to become trained mediators. Tenant and resident representatives may like to talk to other mediation services, for example, Rhondda Cynon Taff, to find out how they have been set up and where they have got their funding from.

Information on Lifetime Homes

Tenant and resident representatives may like to invite someone from the National Assembly for Wales to talk to members about what Lifetime Homes are, and what they mean in practice

Sheltered housing issues

There were a number of issues raised in relation to sheltered housing, during the project. To address these, tenant and resident representatives may like to consider holding a special day on sheltered housing. The invitation could be extended to all sheltered housing tenants of the Council and of housing associations throughout the Vale. The day would need to include input from both Local Authority and housing association landlords, and could cover the following areas

Information for tenants

The role of the warden. What tenants can expect from their warden.

Landlords' arrangements for supporting and supervising wardens

Landlords' arrangements for training wardens, especially about tenants' rights to privacy in the home and their right to get involved and participate in the service

Information on what tenants can expect from the Piper Alarm Service

Information that should be included in tenants handbooks for sheltered housing tenants

Tenancy rights, including the right to participate

Information for tenants, about the rights of tenants in sheltered housing, especially their right to have privacy in their home and their right to participate and get involved

Standards in Sheltered Housing

Discussion on standards for maintenance of outside areas, for example paths to clothes lines and communal gardens to be cleared of moss and treated to prevent regrowth each year.

Discussion on standards for facilities in sheltered housing, for example, adequate heating, grab rails in bathrooms, facility to install a shower. Also adaptations advice for individuals

D A VALE COUNCIL RESIDENTS FORUM

During the course of the discussion workshops, Council participants decided to set up a Council Residents Forum. The Forum has recently had its inaugural meeting and comprises tenant and resident representatives from the Residents Boards.

Forum members have agreed their own framework for how the group will work.

Ideas put forward by Rowan Associates for consideration by the Forum

The following are some ideas put forward by Rowan Associates, which the Forum may like to consider. These ideas arise from Rowan's experience of how similar groups can work.

Aims of the Forum

Rowan Associates suggest that the Forum consider including the following among its aims:

to monitor the three action plans agreed during the Best Value and Tenant Participation Project

to receive and discuss draft policies, procedures and proposals relating to the Vale's housing management, maintenance and property services before they go to Cabinet

to identify and develop future priorities for the Council and for joint work between the Council and the Tenant Representatives

Meetings

The Forum may like to consider timetabling its meetings so that they can be held before a meeting of the Cabinet. This would ensure that the Forum has the opportunity to comment on draft policies and have their views included in papers considered by Cabinet.

For example:

- ◇ the Forum could meet 10 days before a meeting of the Cabinet
- ◇ all relevant policies and procedures for discussion by Cabinet could be sent out to Forum members by the Council, not less than 7 days before the meeting
- ◇ comments and issues raised at the Forum, could be incorporated by the Council into the papers to go to Cabinet

Membership

The action plan arising out of this project ranges across the responsibilities of three departments of the Council. In implementing the action plan it will be important to ensure that there is effective communication and consistency of approach across the different departments of the Council who work within the Tenant Participation Compacts.

During the course of the project, it became apparent that there can sometimes be communication problems, both between different Council departments, and between the Council and tenant and resident representatives.

In order to improve communications, and to ensure that participation in the Vale maintains a constructive and effective working partnership between officers and tenant and resident representatives, the Forum may like to consider revising its membership to include as full and equal members of the Forum, senior officers from the departments of the Council who have responsibility for working within the Tenant Participation Compacts. These officers could include Heads of Service/Operational Managers of Housing, Maintenance and Property.

Ensuring the Forum fits into existing participation structures

To avoid any duplication with the existing local meetings between staff and Residents' Boards, the Forum may like consider clarifying the distinction between individual or local issues which are appropriate for discussion at local level, and Council-wide issues which will be appropriate for discussion at the Forum.

The Forum would not replace the need for the Vale Council to ensure that there are adequate mechanisms in place for consulting the wider body of tenants over relevant issues.

Monmouthshire Crime and Disorder Statutory Partnership

The Partnership is well resourced and supported from the top of the key organisations – the local authority and the police - Monmouthshire County Council's Chief Executive provides leadership for the Partnership.

RSLs operating in Monmouthshire provided information to feed into the first crime and disorder audit in Monmouthshire and attend Partnership meetings which deal with strategic issues. In addition, housing officers attend REDPOP (problem-oriented policing) groups at local levels. These multi-agency groups look at issues that emerge from the audit for specific areas, identify hot spots of problems, and practical ways of dealing with the problems. Tenants and residents associations can be involved in the Red Pops, and minutes of local groups are fed into the workings of the strategic group.

Working relationships have improved because the agencies have strategic knowledge of each other's agendas and there is a partnership in place which can respond to funding opportunities. Agencies now find it easier to deal with problems jointly when they arise at the local level. The REDPOP structure has proved to be a successful and effective model for addressing issues and problems at the local level.