

## **Innovation into Action !**

### **Beechwood and Ballantyne Estate Management Board, the Wirral.**

#### **A case study: Developing and supporting the development of a New Community Housing Association - 2003 to 2005**

##### **Background**

The Beechwood and Ballantyne estates consisted of 1,234 council owned dwellings. Beechwood and Ballantyne Estate Management Board had managed them since 1<sup>st</sup> October 1995.

In December 2002 the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral took the decision to start the process towards stock transfer of their whole stock of over 14,500 properties. As the EMB had long had a desire to investigate setting up its own community based or tenant led RSL, this provided an opportunity to investigate this option in some depth. It is also important to review the position of the EMB within the transfer and ensure that if an ownership organisation was not viable, it could emerge within any new RSL as a strong board with a management agreement that reflects residents' aspirations.

PEP conducted a feasibility study which concluded that the Beechwood and Ballantyne Estate Management Board on the Wirral, should set up a tenant led housing association, as a subsidiary of the Liverpool Housing Trust Group; Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association (BBC Housing Association).

The Council had already proposed a transfer of all their housing stock to a local housing company (Wirral Partnership Homes). All tenants, including those on Beechwood and Ballantyne, were balloted on this proposal between 15<sup>th</sup> March and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2004. The ballot was in favour of stock transfer. The offer document allowed the tenants on Beechwood and Ballantyne to be given the opportunity to vote for transfer to BBC Housing Association. A clause to this effect was contained within the offer document (the stage one notice) sent out to all tenants. The overall vote was in favour of the transfer and triggered the proposal of transferring the Beechwood and Ballantyne estates to a tenant led housing association or to Wirral Partnership Homes, which meant a second ballot and a new choice for tenants on Beechwood and Ballantyne.

##### **Aims and objectives of the development work**

The main aspects of the subsequent work with Beechwood and Ballantyne Estate Management Board was to:

- Set up the shadow board for Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association.
- Although tenant shadow board members were current EMB board members, PEP had to offer more tenants the opportunity to get involved at this stage, recruit independent board members and work with council nominees.

- Ensure that high quality training was provided for all of the board members; to enable the board to be able to direct and manage the affairs of the new housing association, and that it would meet the competencies and criteria required by the Housing Corporation for registration.
- Ensure that the board and other interested tenants are fully involved in drafting the policy documents for registration, with the Housing Corporation, and consult on and draft the proposed new tenancy agreements.
- Publicise and promote the tenant led option of the Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association to tenants on the Beechwood and Ballantyne estates.
- To ensure that tenants have enough information to be able to assess the offer of a stock transfer to Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association and are encouraged to vote in favour.

### **Outline of the work.**

There was a days training event per month for the shadow board, plus two or three shadow board meetings per month. These meetings involved:

- Discussions about the constitution and registration of BBC Housing Association
- Preparation of the offer document and tenancy agreement
- Preparation and policy formation for registration with the Housing Corporation.

PEP organised and delivered training and attended board meetings. PEP also produced draft documentation and policies in collaboration with the board and LHT for registration with the housing corporation, worked upon the drafting of the offer document and in the recruitment process for (shadow) board members interim lead officer and the post of chief executive officer for the organisation.

### **The Board has 16 voting members made up as follows:**

- Seven tenant board members from Beechwood and Ballantyne estate;
- Three council (nominated) board members;
- Six independent board members – one of whom is a resident on the Beechwood and Ballantyne estate.

## **B&BCHA: Training Programme**

Service Planning: Business Plan and Validation: Funding report: VAT Shelter: Housing Demand: Finance, Risk Planning and Support Functions: Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members: Self-governance: Structure and committees and Code of conduct: The Offer document: Relationship between Chair and Chief Officer: Intra Group agreement: Housing Services: Response Repairs and Investment: Monitoring and reporting: Continuous Improvement: Understanding the role of regulation and the Housing Corporation: The Board as employer: Equality and Diversity: Working in partnership with other organisations

In addition there were regular liaison meetings with the Council and with the LHT Group and their consultants. There were a number of newsletters produced to publicise the Beechwood and Ballantyne proposal, publicity events (including a show house to be funded by the LHT group), and door-to-door canvassing. The EMB, PEP and staff from the LHT GROUP carried out the publicity campaign jointly.

## **The aims of Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association.**

### **Included:**

- To fully involve local people in making decisions about their homes and community.
- Provide investment to surpass the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.
- Raise sufficient finance to support the investment programme.
- Provide an estate based professional service to manage homes effectively and efficiently.
- Further improve the repairs service.
- Keep rents affordable.
- Foster employment and training opportunities for local residents.
- Develop neighbourhood management and multi-agency working in the community.

## **Monitoring and reporting**

The work was monitored closely by the EMB and the ODPM and funded by the tenant empowerment programme.

## **Successful vote yes campaign and independantly conducted ballot**

Following the successful ballot of tenants in favour of stock transfer on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2005, the Beechwood and Ballantyne stock was transferred to the newly formed Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association (BBCHA) and the remaining Council stock transferred to Wirral Partnership Homes (WPH).

Contact: Ian Powell, Consultant & Managing Director PEP [ian.p@pep.org.uk](mailto:ian.p@pep.org.uk)