



Finally, what happened during the Appraisal system?

Well, we ensured that –

- All tenants groups received information for their members.
- We wrote an empowerment strategy.
- We worked on improving leaseholder involvement.
- We ensured all sheltered tenants knew what was going on.
- Ran a freephone service.
- Attended all the Council's consultation sessions to ensure that the tenants' voice was heard.
- Encouraged Tenant Participation in some previously unrepresented areas.
- Assessed the Council's financial advice – to ensure you got the facts.
- Contributed to the development of the Council's publicity.



Please let us know if you would like this edition of ConTACT translated into another language, or made available in a large print or audio format.



Jane Eyles from TPAS at the Housing Options roadshow



Best wishes for a Happy New Year from **TACT**

Tenants and leaseholders view on Stock Options

TACT's View

Welcome to our **Special CONTACT**. As you know the Council has spent the last year assessing the Options for the future of your homes.

Housing Options has been a very time consuming piece of work for all members of TACT but particularly for those tenant members on the Working Party.

As we were required to do this we felt obliged to do the whole thing properly – and to make sure that tenants and leaseholders benefited from the process.

So far we have tried to keep our position neutral as we wanted to make sure that you had all the facts. However, as the project has now reached an important stage we felt the time was right to tell you what we think – and to ask for you to get fully involved in this last stage.

Alan Rickman, Byran Whitfield, David Cruden, Cyril Gilbert-Wood, Ken Gore, Sandra Salter, Brian Hayes, Paul Bungey.

The ITA/Stock Options Forum – Winter 2004.

So what's happened so far?



The Council is required to ensure it can reach the Decent Homes Standard by 2010 – this is a very basic standard, which the Council can meet.

However, the Council will be £400,000 short on each year which may mean there will have to be cuts in our existing services. However, TACT will continue to prioritise savings and economies. The Council will not be able to offer us anything more. It is unlikely that you will be receiving a better service than now. TACT undertakes to keep this continuously under review.

During the consultation exercise a significant minority of you expressed an interest in an Arm's Length Management Organisation. However, because we are in the grey area of only being a little short financially the Government has closed this option. ALMO had all the advantages of protecting our security of tenure – but would allow the Council to access extra cash to make up the shortfall.

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Special ConTACT - Stock Options - The Latest News !!



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This has meant that our options narrowed – to sticking with the Council and accepting savings to our services – or looking seriously at transfer to a housing association.

Transfer is something that we have rejected in the past – and is not an option that we looked at with any enthusiasm this time around. TACT does accept that the district is short of affordable housing and that transfer would go some way to improving this.

TACT fact –

Those of you who responded clearly supported staying with the Council. However, the vast majority didn't respond. We need you to this time.

TACT was very disappointed at the response to the survey first time around and this means that we really don't know what you want in the way of service provision. We are assuming that many of you didn't respond because you are basically satisfied with the service delivery. But we are concerned that unless you came to a drop in session last year you would not really know that we face a £400,000 shortfall on a yearly basis. Which means that "Staying as you Are" is not a long term option.

Current Government policy is not to see Council housing as the long term option – but TACT is determined to ensure that tenants are at the heart of any final decision.

So what happens next? – the Council is going to ask you what you think about the options – we must not have a low response. Please read everything in this package – **and when you receive your questionnaire in the post then RESPOND!**

It's only one question and will take a moment of your time.

If you have any queries ring TPAS on 0800 169 1814

TACT's view

TACT has long considered it's position and has had a number of special meetings culminating in an important TACT meeting in September.

All this has been voluntary work and we have attended over 50 meetings.

Our view initially was to protect what we had. But we are very concerned that the option of the status quo is not a real long term one.

However, TACT is resolved to protect:

- Tenants' rights;
- Tenants' link to the Council and
- Tenants' secure tenancy.

TACT will also work to protect leaseholders' rights.

TACT's view therefore is that we opt for staying with the Council this time - but we do not accept the status quo.

We recognise that we should review how the Council operates; what say we have in the process; how we can encourage more people to be involved.

AS PART of the stock options process the Council had to assess issues that you thought were important about your local area – however, because of the poor return this has proved quite hard.

So TACT will need to take on promoting the need to improve investment in our homes. We do not want you having to accept second class services.

One way we can do this is by promoting our involvement in the services that affect our homes. As Council tenants and leaseholders we already enjoy the 'Right To Manage' and we are now looking seriously at whether we could use that as the best way forward.

The Right to Manage is a government decreed right that says we can take on direct responsibility for the services that affect our home. We believe that this could bring about service improvements in areas like ground maintenance, repairs etc. – where we know you are not happy at the moment.

The positive aspect of the right to manage is that we remain as Council tenants and that our agreement about service levels is enforceable through the Council. This would be reviewed as well on a regular basis – so if you didn't think it was working then the agreement could be stopped. We are going to look at the option in more detail in the New Year and that could be about establishing local agreements – in Stanmore, Kings Worthy etc or it maybe about reaching a central agreement between TACT and the Council.

We will keep you informed of these developments – **but what about you, would you like to know more or indeed get involved in this debate? See back page for contact details.**

TACT fact –

Locally run Tenant boards provide a better level of service than their Council!

