

# **The Westlea and OCHA Marriage**

## **Will it work and what happens next?**

### **Introduction.**

The workshop conducted on 26 July involved 9 District Forum members in reviewing what consultation had taken place on the proposed partnership as well as which methods were seen as being most effective. In addition the group also identified what they believe are key points for action going forward.

The workshop used a “metaplanning” approach based on a series of key questions. The results for the day were collated and prioritised and a draft report agreed before the end of the day.

### **Question 1**

#### **What consultation has taken place on the proposed partnership?**

Westlea wants its tenants and residents at the centre of decision and consultation. Working together with them, they have used many methods to consult.

Such as:

- District Forum
- 1 – 1 interviews
- Video Box
- HOME Magazine
- Visits
- Telesurveys
- Tenants business Plan
- Senior Staff at meetings with residents, involving Q&A.

### **District Forum**

The District Forum plays a key role in designing how consultation works with Westlea. They have been active in the “Questions and Answer” sessions and have worked together to produce a plan for the consultation process.

As a key player, the District Forum has consulted with tenants and residents at the Spring Conference Partners Event and through their Community Get Togethers. These “Get Together’s” give tenants and residents the opportunity of working together, in large and small groups, producing questions and giving valuable feedback to Westlea.

Working as a team they produced a report for the Shadow Board.

### **1 – 1 face to face structured interviews**

Interviews were conducted at a Community event.  
In total 30 questionnaires, (the format was approved by residents), were completed. The interviews were conducted by a resident DF member. More would have been completed but only 30 questionnaires had been produced.  
The approach was highly effective because it involved tenants and residents talking to each other and was anonymous.  
All those interviewed raised many issues and feedback was detailed and genuine.

### **Video Box**

This produced a DVD featuring 12 tenants and residents and was a one off event, conducted at the Spring Conference Partnership Event.  
However, as yet no decision has been made on production and distribution. The intention is that it will be shown to tenants and residents in the future.

### **“HOME” Magazine**

A “Question and Answer” sleeve was produced by staff working with tenants and residents. This gave everyone clear information and answered immediate questions. A card was produced that encouraged residents to ask questions and make comments. A competition to decide the name of the group was also included.

### **Telesurveys**

The survey questions have been agreed between Westlea and it’s tenants and residents.  
The sample will cover 20% of Westlea’s tenants and residents- selected randomly. There are no results as yet as the survey is scheduled in the near future.

### **Tenants business Plan**

During the process of collecting information for these years Tenants Business Plan, the participants were asked about their priorities for spending any savings made as a result of the partnership.  
This is in the process of being collated.

### **Chief Executive-briefing and “Q&A” at meetings with residents**

David Ashmore briefed tenants and residents on the proposed partnership between Westlea and Oxford Citizens Housing Association (OCHA). He explained why Westlea and the Board had taken this decision to go ahead.  
All those attending had a chance to ask questions and make comments. Some questions were taken away and answers will be obtained for tenants and residents.

### **Please note.**

The District Forum members involved in the workshop, decided on the comparative effectiveness and impact of the methods described above.

The methods seen as most effective were:

- Consultation through the District forum
- 1 – 1 interviews
- Video box

These methods were seen as being over twice as effective as “HOME” Magazine, Telesurveys, visits etc...

## **Question 2**

### **What did we learn and what happens next?**

Throughout this consultation many lessons were learnt and it was clear what the next steps should be.

- Resident Involvement
- District Forum
- Staff and Residents
- Westlea and OCHA joint events
- 1 – 1 Interviews
- Fun/Video Box
- Finance

### **Resident Involvement**

By having residents involved the following lessons have been learnt:

Tenants and Residents:

- all groups must be involved and nobody should be missed out
- informal contact and talking to other tenants and residents is preferred
- would like more involvement and consultation – they have many questions and want answers
- Who were involved thought it was a good idea

To become a “Landlord of Excellence” Westlea/OCHA should act on what they have learnt through this feedback.

### **District Forum**

The District Forum are key player in this proposed partnership. They are all tenants and residents themselves and understand the issues and needs of other tenants and residents.

### **Staff and Residents**

The giving of information to tenants and residents is very important.

Staff need to understand the role of the District Forums Consultation champions and how best to consult with tenants and residents. Some staff appear to erect barriers which hinders the process.

Managers need to communicate with and emphasise to their staff the importance of involvement. This will make the proposed partnership much easier.

Good communication between tenants and residents and staff/managers is of paramount importance.

### **Westlea and OCHA joint events**

This consultation has meant those involved have been able to learn more about each others organisations. Through this there is a clear expression of interest in joining and working together, in the future.

### **1v1 Interviews**

This is seen to be a very effective method of consultation.

### **Fun/Video Box**

Consultation can be improved by having a fun less formal element built into it. The video box is a positive and simple way to evidence its effectiveness.

### **Finance**

Tenants and residents are concerned about the financial implications and want more information about this and what it means to them.

## **Question 3**

### **The Partnership-how can we make it work for tenants and residents?**

The key issues were:

- District Forum
- Joint groups
- Service improvements
- Money
- Better housing

District Forum:

- Better and more consultation with the DF.
- More involvement with residents
- Training with staff and residents together.

Joint groups:

- Working and learning together adds value
- Producing a Joint Magazine a possibility
- A joint forum could be formed with joint event organised for all.

Service Improvement:

- Better services for both groups.

Money:

- More money should lead to improved services
- Buy more land to increase housing stock.

Better Housing:-

- Support for Older residents
- Greener issues being addressed
- Finance for more and better repairs.

#### Question 4

#### What do Residents expect from Management?

- Honesty  
-be open and honest
- Information  
-share information
- Feedback  
-continuous!
- Keeping your eye on the ball  
-Westlea must stay focused on the day to day issues!  
-Don't let things slip.
- Team work  
-Lets work together and increase cooperation between residents and staff
- Better Communication  
-Listen and talk to residents.