

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL – 11 SEPTEMBER 2007

Title of report	HOUSING STOCK TRANSFER –CONSULTATION UPDATE
Key Decision: (Y / N)	a) Financial (N) b) Community (N)
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Purpose of report	To provide an update to Members on the results of recent independent research on the proposed housing stock transfer.
Reason for Decision:	No decision is required, this report provides supplementary information to the main agenda report
Strategic aims	Enough Decent & Affordable Homes
Implications: Financial/Staff Link to relevant Corporate Action Team	This report has no additional financial implications to those set out in the main report Housing Improvement Group
Risk Management	No additional risks over those set out in the main report
Equalities Impact Assessment	None
Human Rights Transformational Government	None None beyond those set out in the main report
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Monitoring Officer	On the advice of Trowers and Hamlin, external lawyers, the report is satisfactory.
Consultees	None.
Background papers	Detailed results of independent telephone research waves and door-knocking exercise
Recommendations	IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT COUNCIL: Note the contents of this report

1. Introduction

1.1. As a key part of consultation for the housing transfer, the Council and its advisors (IPB Communications) have undertaken various waves of research. These comprise:

- Independent telephone research
- Door knocking
- Responses to the formal offer documentation.

1.2. This report summarises the findings from these activities, and complements the main agenda report.

1.3. Throughout the consultation period surveys have looked not only at likely voting intentions but also people's concerns about transfer, the level of information received and whether they required more help or information.

1.4. It is important to note that these waves of research cover a broader spectrum and volume of tenants than the formal responses to the offer document via the tear-off reply card (as summarised in paragraph 2.1.2 of the main agenda report).

2. Overall Views

2.1. The following table sets out the responses received in various research waves to the question:

If there were a ballot tomorrow, how would you answer the following question: 'Are you in favour of the transfer of housing from the Council to a new not-for-profit housing organisation called North west Leicestershire Homes?'

2.2. The table below clearly shows the trends over a period of time, and the move to a greater level of support for transfer. However, it is also evident that there appears to be no overwhelming support for either a yes or a no vote.

	Mar-06	Jan-07	Jul-07	Aug-07	Sep-07
	Independent Telephone Research Wave 1	Independent Telephone Research Wave 2	Independent Telephone Research Wave 3	Council Run Door Knocking	Independent Telephone Research Wave 4
Sample Size	402	400	401	3149	313
Yes	16.6%	25.75%	17.00%	33.00%	28.8%
No	44.6%	38.00%	38.90%	20.00%	33.9%
Unsure	38.8%	36.25%	44.10%	40.00%	37.3%

- 2.3. It is important to note that the July 07 research wave sample comprised of a disproportionately high number of older tenants. Typically those in the older age groups , in particular the over seventies, oppose transfer.
- 2.4. The latest results though, show a lower level of support for the proposals than has been the case in other authorities where tenants have voted in favour of transfer.
- 2.5. Of those saying they would vote against transfer, in the final research wave, 51.7% stated they simply 'Prefer the Council to have ownership.'

3. Specific Issues

- 3.1. As well as asking tenants about their views on transfer the research has also probed tenants understanding of the transfer process and the consequences of voting in a particular way. In the final research wave the following headlines are apparent
 - 96% of tenants are aware of the transfer proposal
 - 97.6% of tenants know they will have a chance to vote
 - 89.4% of tenants say they will, or are likely to, vote
 - 82.8% understand that if transfer does not go ahead there would have to be major cuts in the housing service
 - 91.2% of tenants understand their rents would be the same whether or not transfer goes ahead
 - 79.1% of tenants said they wanted either no more information on transfer or did not know what further information they would like
- 3.2. The clear message from these results is that tenants are fully aware of the transfer proposal and understand what the transfer would mean in key areas. This strongly suggests that as much as possible has been done to inform tenants about transfer and indeed to provide them with information to answer their questions or concerns. This is a view echoed by the Council's communications consultants (IPB) when they submitted the results of the final wave of independent research

4. Summary and Conclusions

- 4.1. The results of research clearly show that opinion around the transfer is broadly equally split between those likely to vote yes and those likely to vote no. That said the results show less support for the proposals than in other authorities where tenants have voted in favour of transfer.
- 4.2. The research does demonstrate quite clearly that tenants do understand transfer and its implications and that they feel they have received enough information to make an informed choice. This latter view is echoed in advice received from the Council's communications consultants.