
REVIEW OF REWARD AND RECOGNITION SCHEME

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Bill Dixon
Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio

Responsible Director - Cliff Brown, Director of Community Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides details of a review of the Reward and Recognition Scheme undertaken by a small Task and Finish Group made up of Tenant Board Members and Officers.
2. This report is to be considered at Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2009. Any outcomes from that meeting will be reported verbally, or if major changes are to be made, by an additional report at this Cabinet.

Summary

3. The Reward and Recognition scheme was introduced in 2008 after lengthy consultation with tenants and leaseholders (minute NS35 refers) a copy of the report is attached as **Appendix 1**. The Task and Finish group have reviewed the scheme and applied learning from what has been successful. They have also looked to extend the scheme to increase its attraction and increase opportunities for all tenants and leaseholders to benefit.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that the revisions to the scheme detailed in paragraphs 9(a) to (g) be approved.

Reasons

5. The recommendation is supported to enable the scheme to be continually improved.

Cliff Brown
Director of Community Services

Background Papers

There are no background papers.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The reward and recognition scheme positively promotes good behaviour and the keeping of the Good Neighbour Agreement.
Health and Well Being	There are no health and well being issues
Sustainability	There are no sustainability issues
Diversity	There are no diversity issues
Wards Affected	All wards with Council Housing Stock are affected
Groups Affected	All Council tenants and leaseholders are affected
Budget and Policy Framework	The issues contained within this report do represent a change to existing policy .The budget requirements are reflected in the Housing Revenue account and there is an element of invest to save.
Key Decision	This is a key decision
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the “Call – in” procedures this does not represent an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The report has no particular implications for the Sustainable Community Strategy
Efficiency	Best practice from other Housing organisations indicates tenants respond positively to rewards and recognition awards and this can increase user satisfaction and reduce costs associated with dealing with minor complaints .

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Background

6. The Reward and Recognition scheme was initially set up as a best practice initiative to reward tenants and leaseholders for their good behaviour and encourage others to follow their example. The eligibility criteria were widely consulted on and reflected the views of tenants and leaseholders. Tenants or Leaseholders should have:
 - (a) A clear rent account for six consecutive weeks, or
 - (b) Have an agreement to pay any rent arrears or outstanding charges and maintained that for six weeks
 - (c) Have no breaches of their Tenancy Agreement
 - (d) Have signed up to the Good Neighbour Agreement

7. Members of the scheme receive a Darlington Dividend card that gives them membership to Countdown a national company offering discounts with local and national retailers, restaurants and leisure facilities. There is an annual cost to the Housing Revenue account of £3 per card. Members are also eligible for other rewards, such as Saturday morning repairs appointments, a “Golden Goodbye” payment when terminating their tenancy, free packets of seeds and prizes in the clear rent draw. Take up of the scheme from Tenants and Leaseholders has grown steadily.

8. When the scheme was introduced it was agreed that it would be reviewed and further developed. The Tenants Board established a Task and Finish Group to take this work forward and the review is now complete. Initially the group looked at how they could increase take up of the Darlington Dividend and reviewed the leaflets and guidance to make them easier to understand. In addition a frequently asked question sheet was produced. A promotional campaign was put in place using the Hotnews magazine and culminating with an event at the Dolphin Centre for all Council tenants and leaseholders in March 2009. The Task and Finish group also considered what other rewards should be included in the scheme in order to reach a larger and more diverse group of tenants and leaseholders. Currently there are around 700 members and the intention is to steadily build upon this number and review the progress made in December 2009.

Proposals

9. The following revisions are proposed:
 - (a) At present garages are allocated to the applicant who has waited the longest. In some areas garages numbers are small and it can be a lengthy wait before an offer is made. In recognition of the fact that Darlington Dividend Members have already demonstrated good behaviour as either a tenant or leaseholder it is considered appropriate that they should be given priority.

- (b) Introduce a Good Neighbour Award and Youth Award which will be managed by the Tenants Board with input from the Darlington Youth MP. It is proposed that any Tenant or Leaseholder could put forward a nomination and everyone nominated would receive a certificate. Both awards will have a winner who would receive a prize for £100 and ten runners up would each receive £20 at our Annual Tenants Forum.
- (c) Provide new tenants with a welcome package comprising of a £10 voucher redeemable in a local shop for household goods such as bin bags, cleaning materials and light bulbs. In addition a voucher would be provided for two hours of time from the Care and Repair Handyperson for anyone 55 years or over or in receipt of middle rate disability allowance for Care and Repair.
- (d) Mystery Shopping has been piloted for external painting works. However it is difficult to attract good quality volunteers and if the scheme is to be extended to other areas of planned maintenance and capital works we need to provide a financial incentive. Participants would receive a £20 shopping voucher on satisfactory completion of four mystery shops.
- (e) In accordance with current best practice it is proposed that Focus Groups replace many of our customer satisfaction surveys. A Focus Group of tenants and leaseholders would review various aspects of the service and active participants would receive a £20 shopping voucher.
- (f) We want to support the principles of Lifelong Learning by making available small grants to support our Tenants and Leaseholders. It is proposed that there would be an award valued at £150 and that a maximum of 12 awards per annum be given.
- (g) Whilst the Council already has a garden competition open to the whole of Darlington the Tenants Board would like to recognise those Tenants and Leaseholders that have a good garden or have made a significant improvement in recent months by using thank you cards that the Tenant Board would issue.

Outcome of Consultation

- 10. Representatives of the Tenants Board have been included in the review group, contributed suggestions and challenged practices. Ongoing reports from Task and Finish group meetings are submitted to the Tenants Board for comments. The Tenants Board agreed the proposals set out in Paragraph 7.

Financial Implications

- 11. The costs associated with the proposals are shown in Table 1 below, these costs are estimates of the expected maximum expenditure assuming the full take up by those eligible. The costs of around £12k per annum for the proposed Reward and Recognition enhancements can be financed in efficiency savings in the HRA. All costs for printing and stationary and officer time can be found from existing budgets

Table 1: Enhancement to the Reward and Recognition Scheme

Costs of Rewards	£
Good Neighbour Award	600
Welcome Packs	4,500
Care and Repair Vouchers	1,500
Mystery Shopping	1,000
Focus Groups	2,500
Lifelong Learning Award	1,800
Total costs	11,900

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