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| Meeting:         | Housing Operations Board  |
| Agenda Item:     |   |
| Date:            | 21 September 2020   |
| Report Title:    | Newsletter Scrutiny Report  |
| Recommendations: | Agree the management comments on the follow up scrutiny report on local newsletters.<br>Agree the report and the management comments should be reported to the Executive Board and Service Quality Committee. |
| Author:          | Anna Clewlow, Housing Customer Engagement and Insight Manager   |
| Presented by:    | Nick Sedgwick, Director of Service Development  |

### **1. Aim and Purpose**

The aim of this report is to present the latest Scrutiny Panel report on local newsletters.

### **2. Recommendations**

Agree the management comments on the follow up scrutiny report on local newsletters.

Agree the report and the management comments should be reported to the Executive Board and Service Quality Committee.

### **3. Background**

The decision to complete a scrutiny review of local newsletters was originally initiated in July 2019 following a Scrutiny Training session for the new Anchor Hanover Residents' Council. The topic was chosen as the group were passionate about the concept of all residents having access to a local newsletter.

The initial scrutiny report was produced in October 2019 and good progress has been made against the original recommendations including new templates for newsletters and monthly 'corporate' content. The Scrutiny Panel has completed a follow-up review to assess progress against the recommendations made in the original review. The Panel completed a survey to a selection of residents that indicated 82% currently receive a newsletter monthly and 100% of residents would want to receive one.

This follow up report is attached as appendix A. The Scrutiny Panel has found that we have largely responded to the recommendations in the original report but has made the following further recommendations which are presented with the proposed management response.

| <b>Scrutiny recommendation</b>  | <b>Management response</b>   |
|---|--|
| That a policy giving clear directions to estate/location managers that they must produce a monthly local newsletter be introduced ASAP. | This is an issue on which we will issue guidance, not a policy. The guidance will be strengthened to include that newsletters should be produced on a monthly basis. The production of newsletters is part of the local engagement offer launched at the start of September. If it is not appropriate for a newsletter to be produced it is expected that another form of communication with residents will be used. |
| That the safety articles be more relevant to AHG property safety or resident safety.  | The safety articles produced will be reviewed considering this recommendation. Articles to date have covered being aware of scams and a heads up on increasing water temperatures in legacy Anchor estates.  |
| That confirmation of compliance is sought and recorded by the Communication Team.   | The production of newsletters is part of the local engagement offer launched at the start of September. Monitoring of the delivery of this offer, including newsletters or alternative, will start early in 2021, coordinated by the Engagement Team.  |
| The Scrutiny Panel review the outcomes again in 6 months' time  | We will support a follow-up review.  |

#### **4. Customer Impact**

The newsletter complements the new Local Engagement offer and aims to give Anchor Hanover the ability to better promote issues that are of interest to residents nationally and locally whilst promoting resident engagement with a uniform product for all residents across our locations.

#### **5. Key Risks**

There is the risk that residents believe we communicate poorly. The previous scrutiny review has prompted us to improve our approach to local newsletters and this follow-up shows good progress but with some further work to give consistency. The roll-out of the local engagement offer and monitoring of implementation will reinforce our approach.

#### **6. Financial Impact**

There are limited costs in producing newsletters which are met through the service charge.

#### **7. Legal or regulatory issues**

The newsletter scrutiny report meets the regulatory standard as it states that registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and should be involved in the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved.

## **8. Timescales**

It is proposed that that Scrutiny Panel monitor the outcomes and carry a further survey out in six months to ensure that newsletters continue to be produced using the template and stock global articles.

## **9. Appendices**

Appendix A - Review of Local Newsletters Scrutiny Review Outcomes



**Resident Scrutiny Panel**

anchor hanover

Review of  
Local Newsletters Scrutiny Review Outcomes  
dated June – August 2019

August 2020

## **1.1 Introduction**

Anchor Hanover's Residents Council carried out a scrutiny review on Customer Local Newsletters during Jun – August 2019.

The current Scrutiny Panel agreed to review the outcomes of that scrutiny review July 2020.

### **Resident Scrutiny Panel members involved in the review were:**

David Butler – Chair  
Penny Roberts – Member  
Steve Rafferty – Member

## **1.2 Review Objectives**

The Residents Council decided on the following objectives to be achieved by the review:

- Policy to be changed to state that at schemes where there is a LM assigned should produce a newsletter monthly. This ensures all AHG customers receive the same service.
- The Communications and Engagement Teams should provide more guidance for Managers and a point of contact to support them to produce newsletters.
- The same template to be used by all Managers to ensure that all newsletters reach the same standard.
- At least one global article to be provided for inclusion monthly.
- Safety related articles should be provided to Managers for them to include in newsletters.

### 1.3 Agreed Action Plan

Anchor Hanover Group (AHG) agreed the action plan below for this Scrutiny Review and the panel reviewed the Recommendations and the Organisational responses.

| <b>Area of Scrutiny</b>                | <b>Findings</b>  | <b>Recommendation to include benefit to AHG housing customers</b>   | <b>Organisational Response</b>   | <b>Timescale &amp; Task Owner</b> |
|--|--|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Policy and Procedure<br><br><b>(1)</b> | There are currently no guidelines for LM's in relation to providing a newsletter               | Policy to be changed to state that at schemes where there is a LM assigned they should produce a newsletter monthly. This ensures all AHG customers receive the same service. | Firm Guidance document to be introduced  | By March 2020                     |
| Policy and Procedure<br><br><b>(2)</b> | The group is concerned about the amount of support for Managers to produce newsletters         | The Communications and Engagement Teams should provide more guidance and a point of contact to support them to produce newsletters  | To be included in guidance document  | By March 2020                     |
| Format and content<br><br><b>(3)</b>   | There is currently a template available for LM's to use on the intranet, but this is optional. | The same template to be used by all Managers to ensure that all newsletters reach the same standard.  | Agreed   | By March 2020                     |
| Format and content<br><br><b>(4)</b>   | There are currently no suggested articles that affect customers nationally provided            | At least one global article to be provided for inclusion monthly  | Agreed   | By March 2020                     |
| Format and Content<br><br><b>(5)</b>   | The newsletters need to include any important safety information for residents                 | Safety related articles should be provided to Managers for them to include in newsletters   | Agreed as long as this is not the only means of communication with residents re matters of safety and security | By March 2020                     |

**Each Area of Scrutiny is numbered in Red by the Scrutiny Panel for the panel's findings.**

## **1.4 Scrutiny Panel Observations**

**(1)** No policy document was provided to the panel but the panel was directed to the information displayed on "The Bridge" the information hub for LM's as the current policy.

**(2)** A document titled "Housing resident newsletter templates" was produced to the panel as the guidance document for the production of newsletters including how to use the template. The named point of contact for LM's was displayed in (1) above.

**(3)** Two templates are provided to LM's via information on The Bridge directing LM's to the bulletin or on "WorkPlace".

**(4)** Templates for May, July and August 2020 were provided to show global Articles.

**(5)** Templates for May, July and August 2020 were provided to show Safety related articles.

The scrutiny panel posed the following questions to a focus group of mixed tenure residents with the following results:

- Do you receive a local Estate/Location/scheme newsletter? **82% yes 18% no**
- If so, how often? **Monthly**
- Would you want to receive or continue to receive a newsletter? **100% yes**

## **1.5 Outcome Conclusions**

**(1)** Despite the Resident Council recommendation that the policy be changed to state that at schemes where there is a LM assigned they should produce a newsletter monthly, the current guidance provided to LM's does not state this.

**(2)** The document produced "Housing resident newsletter templates" provides comprehensive support and guidance to LM's in production of newsletters. The named point of contact for newsletter assistance is on "The Bridge" and available to LM's.

**(3)** There is a monthly production and distribution of templates provided on "The Bridge" for LM's to download and use.

(4) At least one and sometimes more global articles are part of the monthly template provided on “The Bridge”

(5) A safety related article is included in the monthly template provided on “The Bridge” although not always relevant to AHG residents or property.

Not all Estates/Locations/Schemes residents receive a locally produced newsletter.

## 1.6 Recommendations

- That a policy giving clear directions to estate/location managers that they **Must** produce a monthly **Local** newsletter be introduced ASAP.
- That the safety articles be more relevant to AHG property safety or resident safety.
- That confirmation of compliance is sought and recorded by the Communication Team.
- The Scrutiny Panel review the outcomes again in 6 months’ time.

## 1.7 Conclusions

The Scrutiny Panel concluded that AHG have complied with the Action Plan produced, however there is evidence that not all Estates/Locations/Schemes are carrying out the policy as agreed. Some form of compliance checks need to be carried out on a regular basis and recorded, perhaps by the Area Managers.

The panel wish to acknowledge the assistance given to this review by resident members of the scrutiny pool and Engagement Team Colleagues.

**David A Butler**  
**Chair**  
**Resident Scrutiny Panel**