



Chris Broughton Associates

Your Homes – Your Say

Help shape the future of housing in Ashfield

The soft market testing of Ashfield's housing and housing
management services

Confidential Draft Report

December 2015

(V1 - Not to be distributed outside the project steering group)

1. Introduction

1. The brief that was agreed for this project was:

A soft market testing approach is required which will be qualitative in nature seeking views about the extent to which current housing management policies, services, service delivery and performance is in line with expectations and to canvas ideas about how policies and services might adapt to challenges due to policy and demographic change.

2. This qualitative assessment will therefore take into account housing services managed by both the council and Ashfield Homes.

2. Method

3. The project commenced on the 21st October and the consultation ended on the 27th November with a final report being prepared for a meeting on the 14th December.
4. The study method broadly was in two parts.

A) Information gathering

5. Firstly, with help from Ashfield Council and Ashfield Homes' officers, a series of face to face meetings were set up with tenant and resident groups and other groups such as the Citizens Panel, the Tenant Federation and the Tenant Gateway. A short presentation was made to each of these groups which outlined why the consultation was necessary and why it was necessary to think about how services needed to change in the light of demographic change, public spending and benefit cuts. Meetings also took place with Ashfield Council and Ashfield Homes officers as well as individual service users and members of Ashfield District Council. Notes were taken at all public meetings and a summary of each meeting was published on the specially designed portal for the project.
6. Secondly a questionnaire was devised. The aim of the questionnaire was to validate the general findings from meetings and ensure that those not wishing to contribute to meetings could have their say. The questionnaire was structured to provide feedback on the quality of Ashfield Council and Ashfield Homes' housing services and capture ideas for service improvement. Respondents were not required to give any contact details but were asked to provide some information about themselves to allow cross-tabulations.
7. Thirdly, an on line project portal was established and was live throughout the 4 week consultation. This contained information about the project, notes of public meetings and a link to the project questionnaire. There was also a chat room so that people could raise and discuss issues.
8. Fourthly, supporting management information has been collected and reviewed. A number of stakeholders were interviewed to gather contextual information.

B) Analysis and reporting

9. 100 completed questionnaires were returned and analysed including data from the identical on-line survey. Information from public meetings is appended and was analysed.
10. Much contextual information was obtained from officers and stakeholders and this is reported within the analysis.

11. All of the information has been brought together and reviewed. This has enable findings and conclusions to be drawn.

Publicity

12. In consultation with officers project branding was devised. A public title and strapline was agreed and this was carried on A3 posters and A4 flyers which were designed to draw attention to the project. Both Ashfield Council and Ashfield Homes' websites had front page content for visitors and carried links to the portal and the online survey.
13. The project was launched at the Tenants' Day held by Ashfield Homes on the 21st October which we attended.
14. Posters and flyers were deposited Ashfield Council and Ashfield Homes public receptions and notice boards within community rooms. Notifications were sent to Ashfield Council and Ashfield Homes Facebook followers. As we were unable to engage with a representative TRA group in the rural area we undertook additional publicity using a Parish Council, branch library, doctors surgery, sports centre, primary and secondary school, a community association and the Tin Hat Centre. The Tin Hat Centre kindly arranged for alerts to the project to be sent to their Facebook followers.

The survey questionnaire

15. As mentioned previously the questionnaire was designed to be a back-up for the evidence we collected at meetings. Not everyone is confident about speaking at meetings and we wanted to give those people a chance to have their say. Also were concerned that we needed evidence to support our care in recording views without bias. This survey should be regarded as further information to inform our qualitative appraisal rather than a quantitative strand of research.
16. One person challenged our survey design. Instead of the usual 5 point satisfaction scale we inserted the word 'mostly'. This is because in our experience service users will always have an issue with some aspect of the service especially if their desired outcome has not been achieved. We also faced a challenge about the scope of questions. One person told us that grounds maintenance services should be assessed. We would resist this as it is not exclusively a housing service and more than one agency is involved. Its inclusion would have necessitated the inclusion of many other council services and a longer questionnaire survey. This would have diminished the response rate.
17. We sent bulk supplies of questionnaires to Children's Centres and other community centres. Questionnaires were sent to those Citizen Panel members unable to attend the meeting and the 50 most recent new council tenants. People attending meetings were encouraged to take spare copies and ask family and friends to complete them. All were supplied with reply paid envelopes and were given links to complete the questionnaire on line.
18. We have presented the data in Appendix 1 to this report in a form based upon the questionnaire we devised for the project. The appendix contains a summary of data from all 100 respondents, both actual responses to each question and expressed as a percentage of all those answering each question. We have also analysed the information based upon a number of cross-tabulations dependent upon the household type:

- Summary of data from the 72 tenants and leaseholders, expressed as a percentage of those answering the question;
- Summary of data from the 72 tenants and leaseholders, with the 'no view or don't use' option removed, expressed as a percentage of those answering the question; and
- Summary of data from the 42 households who told us that a member of their family had a long term illness or disability, expressed as a percentage of those answering the question.

Review of management information and Ashfield Homes Delivery Plan.

19. We have reviewed performance information published on Ashfield Homes' website. We were told that this high level view of performance was designed to meet tenant expectations about content and to be easy to understand. The monthly report produced every March contains the cumulative information for the year. Looking across the 4 years to March 2015 it is apparent that some targets have become more challenging (average number of days to re-let a property target down to 22 from 25) and others less challenging (percentage of rent collected target reduced from 99% to 98.5%) We have no issue about the latter as we believe that targets must be realistic. It is also noteworthy that the annual number of repair appointments made has reduced from 19,633 in 2011/12 to 17,109 and the number of appointments kept is consistently high – over 99%.
20. We have also briefly reviewed the performance against the annual survey plan for 2014-5. It is noteworthy that tenancy management and choice based lettings consistently achieve the lowest scores and the call monitoring service (presumably the Lifeline service) the highest.
21. In order to judge how well the above reports reflect the actual quality of service it would be necessary to understand information about the data collection methodology, the response rate and an analysis of the profile of tenants that respond. This would need to be benchmarked against similar organisations. This is outside the scope of this study.
22. We have also reviewed the Ashfield Homes Delivery plan 2015/16. We reference aspects of this plan in our findings below.
23. Ashfield Homes provided us with management information about official complaints made against it. In the 2013/14 forty six complaints were made by service users. This compares to thirty in 2014/15 and twenty seven to date in the current year 2015/16. Analysis of complaints in the current and previous year shows that in each year around 50% of complaints were to do with repair and maintenance issues and around 25% were tenancy support issues in 2015/6 and 32% in 2014/5.

Information from stakeholders

24. A request to interview a representative from the Ashfield Children's Centres was declined but it was agreed that local managers would distribute our questionnaire to service users.
25. A response from Ashfield Homestart is awaited.
26. We interviewed the Leader and Deputy Leader of Ashfield Council, the Ashfield Homes management committee and several officers from Ashfield Homes and Ashfield Council.
27. The leader and deputy leader were interviewed together. They told us about the Council's wider policy aims and how the housing service would play a part in delivering those aims –

for example in respect of implementing the living wage. They told us that their perception was that it was generally a well-run service about which there were relatively few complaints.

28. Officers provided us with a great deal of contextual information about how Ashfield Homes was structured, its governance and consultation arrangements.

Service Specific Information and Findings

29. Firstly we make some general remarks about our meetings with tenant and resident groups, community associations and other groups we attended. Appendix 2 contains the report of each meeting. Each report was published on the on-line portal to demonstrate transparency and enable transparency of the process.
30. Secondly we group the insights gained from these meetings into themes. For each theme we state the views expressed at meetings, add further information from stakeholders, the survey data or policy documents.
31. Thirdly we state key findings for each theme.

Information from meetings with tenant and resident groups and community associations

32. Meetings were held with 4 tenant and resident groups and 2 community associations.
33. Tenant and resident groups believed that the consultation was about future management arrangements and that the council wanted to directly manage all services. We therefore had great difficulty in getting the groups to provide feedback on service scope and quality. We made it clear that the consultation was about *what* level of service is being achieved not *who* should deliver it.
34. People attending the tenant and resident group meetings, mostly told us that they wanted Ashfield Homes to remain their service provider and answers to our questions generally supported this with very little information being given about gaps in services and unsatisfactory service delivery.
35. However when we asked some service specific questions we were given some detailed insights into the level of service quality. This provided insights into the quality of the repairs service, the grounds maintenance service, the community and tenancy support services that are reported in more detail by topic below. At some meetings the status quo of the Ashfield Homes continuing to manage the housing management service was strongly challenged by a small minority of people.

Information from tenant and resident bodies

36. This includes the Tenant Gateway, the Tenant Federation and the Citizens Panel.
37. The main reason for meeting with these groups was to raise awareness about the project and encourage people to participate in the consultation by attending public events as advertised on the website and completing questionnaires.
38. The tenant federation meeting was badly attended and no notes were made of the meeting.

39. The Tenant Gateway meeting provided some key insights that have informed our findings. Gateway Members believed that the public generally did not generally distinguish between Ashfield Council and Ashfield Homes. Gateway members felt it would be difficult to engage with younger tenants as those tenants would largely find the service to be good. Members explained that in the past the issue that would bring tenants to meetings was the poor state of repair of council tenancies but this was no longer an issue as the decent homes programme has resolved these issues and new tenants are offered homes fitted out to a modern standard in good repair. Gateway Members also told us that that tenant involvement was much improved leaving overall, little to complain about service qualities. One member described the homeless service as 'a nightmare', others asserted that the grounds maintenance and street cleaning services were poor in their area.

A summary of evidence and findings by service

Repairs

40. Tenants agreed that this is the most important part of the housing management service. They were overwhelmingly positive about the response and quality of work from Ashfield Homes. A small number of people cited problems. An example was given regarding minor works sub-contractors getting it wrong and having to rectify the work. Several examples were given of failure to diagnose a fault resulting in several visits by inspectors and ineffective repairs. These tenants felt that the inspector was not taking them seriously and not listening to their views about the fault.
41. We noted that tenant involvement officers attending meetings asked tenants to report repairs and other problems to them. We note that the management information published on the website collects information about repairs appointments and an overall satisfaction with the repairs service but not performance against completion targets.
42. Our survey findings are consistent with Ashfield Homes' overall satisfaction rating with 10% of council tenants being unhappy with speed of repair and 5% being unhappy with quality of repair. Comments by tenants on the survey form on this part of the service included 4 negative comments mostly about appointments and speed of repair and 20 positive comments mostly about speed and quality of work.

Lettings

43. In meetings we asked for information from people that had moved home recently. All but one tenant said that the bidding process was easy to understand and all the assistance they needed was given. One example was raised where an applicant in high housing need had not understood the system and had failed to keep bidding after the first unsuccessful bid.
44. A small number of recent movers said that there were minor faults in their new home but most said that the home was in good condition and good repair.
45. One tenant told us that she had got her tenancy through the housing options service coming from the private rented sector. She complained about delays in obtaining the information they needed and an unreasonably long time in a decision to rehouse being made.
46. We sent questionnaires to the 50 tenants who had most recently moved in. The 5 replies indicated that they found the process satisfactory and thought the staff were very helpful.

There was only one negative comment and that was about an outstanding repair when the letting was made.

Support for older people

47. All tenants spoke highly of the Lifeline Service. There were mixed views about the visiting service which many tenants did not use because they did not consider it necessary or value for money. Around one third of tenants present at meetings had mobile phone contracts in addition to landline contracts. Land lines are needed to deliver the Lifeline service. Questionnaire survey analysis using the 4 point scale had 96% of respondents saying they were sometimes or mostly happy with the service with only 4% being sometimes or mostly unhappy with the service. One tenant commented that ‘the services for over 60s cannot be faulted’.

Households where someone living with them is long term sick or disabled

48. Forty two households equal to 42% of respondents told us they were in this group and all but 10 were council tenants. They represented just under half of tenants in the sample. It is noteworthy that half of the whole group are pensioner households and around one third are households with dependent children. We undertook analysis to see if their customer satisfaction was better or worse than that of all respondents to the survey. We found that they were less satisfied than all respondents with response to enquiries and information from the Council. They were significantly less satisfied the council’s resident involvement, community protection services and aspects of the housing benefit service. They were slightly more satisfied when contacting Ashfield Homes and the quality of information received from it. They were also happier with the tenant involvement service than all service users as well as their overall assessment of Ashfield Homes’ service.

The Housing Benefit Service

49. Tenants were reluctant to talk about the housing benefit service. This was understandable as to do so in a public meeting would be a breach of privacy. However two general points were made. Firstly that staff generally did the best they could, given that it’s a complex system that can result in unwelcome outcomes. Secondly one meeting highlighted the exceptional problems faced by some groups of tenants especially the self-employed and those with changing circumstances. The older person audiences we mostly met in these meetings seemed to have little difficulty with the system. A more detailed look at this service was not considered appropriate as the implementation of the new Universal Credit system is imminent.

Tenancy support (excluding support to older people)

50. The most frequently raised issues concerned grounds maintenance. Tenants remarked that there were always seasonal response problems such as clearing leaves and gritting as personal safety was high on the agenda for elderly residents. It is noteworthy that grounds maintenance was not considered by us to be part of the housing service. Some groups told us that the scope of the review was not wide enough and it should have included grounds maintenance. Groups in some areas went on to complain about poor standards of grounds maintenance, others said they were getting a responsive and co-operative service that they

valued. It was clear that service delivery of this function is complex and can involve the county council, the district council and Ashfield Homes.

51. In some areas there were complaints about anti-social behaviour, dog fouling, hedge cutting, litter and dumping. Police Community Support officers were generally present and Council Community Protection officers where present were attentive and informative on these issues.
52. The survey provided further evidence about above average levels of dissatisfaction. In particular 25% of all respondents told us that they were 'sometimes or mostly unhappy' with Ashfield Homes' response to untidy areas and anti-social behaviour. Similarly the survey recorded the highest dissatisfaction levels regarding the Council's Community Protection service, with 34% of respondents saying that they were 'sometimes or mostly unhappy' with speed of response and 32% 'sometimes or mostly unhappy' with quality of response. It is noteworthy that the dissatisfaction level is higher from households with someone who is long term sick or disabled living with them – 38% each for each of these questions.
53. At Hucknall there were specific concerns about problems that affected the neighbourhood and many of the problems affected more than one agency. Examples of Issues raised were localised flooding, dog fouling, dilapidated shops, garage sites and anti-social behaviour.
54. We believe that the instance of anti-social behaviour is noteworthy. It was the main item of discussion at the Welbeck CA (Hucknall). Residents expressed frustration at the failure to deal with the dangerous and illegal use of trial bikes by young people. They found the proliferation of this activity hard to understand given the fatality that occurred in August 2015 when a 16 year old rider was killed after colliding with a van. They could not understand why agencies and parents had not been able to end the use of motor bikes in this way particularly when the matter had wide coverage in the press and across social media. The Police CSO summarised the problems from a police point of view. The police has a 'no pursuit' policy and a specialist team had been disbanded due to spending cuts. A police officer or CSO could not reasonably be expected to tackle one or more bikes singlehanded. The CSO appealed for information about the identity of perpetrators and the meeting accepted that this might not be forthcoming because of the fear of retribution. Some people thought that the sale of such vehicles should be illegal. There were no suggestions from any of the officers present representing the Council or Ashfield Homes, indeed only the only officers present were from the Ashfield Homes' maintenance team. This is surprising given that the issue was high profile and had been high on the agenda of the Association since August.
55. Overall the evidence suggests that the response of the Council and Ashfield Homes to this community is inadequate and un-co-ordinated and is a regrettable example of public agencies failing working effectively together.
56. Given that community protection and community/tenancy support issues were a major area of customer dissatisfaction we decided to investigate Ashfield Homes' delivery plan to understand the policy framework within which officers work.

Selected text from Ashfield Homes Delivery Plan 2015/6 – anti-social behaviour.

Page 4, Local Context (edited by us)

AHL is a key contributor towards ADC's strategic priorities and recognises that its ability to contribute is dependent on a number of factors including:

- Working in partnership to maximise the effect of what we do. Our work with the Police, Social Care providers, Probation Service and local schools are examples of these.

ENV 3: Sustaining a reduction in anti-social behaviour Quality of Life Result (Outcome) Community Responsibility for an attractive and safe environment

Why is this important? Crime historically high, with low public confidence Ashfield contains 3 of 15 identified priority areas across Nottinghamshire. Youth engagement and diversionary activity reduces crime and improves aspirations.

AHL continue to work with ADC in respect of dealing with ASB in the District and provide support as and when requested *whilst recognising that ADC are now the lead organisation in respect of dealing with serious ASB involving ADC tenants.*

Continue to meet with ADC and the Police and other relevant agencies to ensure that all necessary procedures, processes, communication links are embedded to ensure an effective multi agency approach is adopted.

57. Also significant were issues raised about the condition of local shops and damage to some boundary walls picked up on a recent estate inspection. An issue concerning untidy gardens was also raised. Members of the public pressed for solutions to these problems. We consider that the officer response of 'that's another department' was both inappropriate and inadequate.
58. The above case study and evidence from our survey leads to the first main finding of our report that inter agency working is a problem area and it is especially significant in the policy area of Community Protection and Community Safety.

Tenant involvement

59. TRA members told us that they valued the tenant involvement service and considered it to be of high quality. In one meeting tenants told us that they thought that the council would not sustain the quality of the tenant involvement service provided by Ashfield Homes if services were managed directly. We are in no doubt that this is an important issue for long standing tenants who equate improvements in the overall quality of the housing service with the level of tenant involvement.
60. However the survey provided further evidence in the form of above average levels of dissatisfaction. In particular 38% of all respondents told us that they were 'sometimes or mostly unhappy' with the opportunities that Ashfield Homes' provide to enable tenants to 'have their say'. Aspects of the council's resident involvement also had high levels of dissatisfaction compared to other areas, for example 25% of all respondents told us that

they were 'sometimes or mostly unhappy' with the opportunities that the Council provide to enable residents to 'have their say'.

61. Part of our brief was to obtain insights by meeting with the tenant and resident associations (TRA) and community associations (CA). This was achieved and we noted that with few exceptions that TRA members tended to be older people. Further that the Tenant Federation and the Tenant Gateway largely attended by the leading players in the TRAs. In many respects the TRA/Federation/Gateway is a closed shop or a self-serving system and we would argue that this is a factor in the failure to engage with younger people as illustrated below.
62. We went to considerable lengths to engage with younger people to ensure a more balanced report. A key part of our approach was to create an online 'your homes – your say 'community'' and we were grateful to officers in Ashfield Council and Ashfield homes for providing links from their websites and messaging their social media contacts. This appeared to have little effect and we were unable to establish the online community and an effective dialogue with it.
63. We quickly implemented alternative strategies involving Children's Centres, new tenants and community organisations especially in the rural area. We consider that this was partially successful in that 63% of our survey respondents were from non pensioner households and 32% told us they had dependent children living with them.
64. However Ashfield Homes and the Council were unable to lead us to an effective connection with a group of engaged younger service users either directly or online. Evidence from the survey suggests that tenants and residents are not engaged by online content. Nearly half of all respondents told us that they 'don't use or have no view' about the Council's website with a higher proportion providing the same response to contacting the council by email. The proportion of all respondents 'don't use or have no view' about the Ashfield Homes website was higher at exactly 50%.
65. Again we visited the Ashfield Homes delivery plan to understand what is being aimed for.

Selected text from Ashfield Homes Delivery Plan 2015/6 – tenant involvement.

Page 4, Local Context

AHL is a key contributor towards ADC's strategic priorities and recognises that its ability to contribute is dependent on a number of factors including:

- Working closely with our local community to enable them to have a significant voice in improving and developing AHL's services.

2.4 Tenant Priorities

2.4.1 AHL has an established Tenants Gateway and Tenants Compact forming part of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Structure. Mystery Shoppers and Tenant Inspectors have been appointed allowing tenant and customer scrutiny of services. The three current priorities identified by tenants as a result of the last local 'offer events' are: 1) Repairs and Maintenance 2) Anti-Social Behaviour 3) Tenant Involvement

2.4.3 Involvement with tenants has been further expanded by the establishment of a mini Tenant Gateway as a vehicle for involvement and empowerment of tenants in the receipt of Supported Housing Services.

2.4.4 In addition to the Tenants Gateway AHL will continue with its commitment to the wider involvement of the tenants and residents within our District, via the Ashfield Federation for Tenants and Residents Associations (AFTRA) and their associated member groups, Tenant and Residents Associations (TRA's)

2.4.4 In addition to the Tenants Gateway AHL will continue with its commitment to the wider involvement of the tenants and residents within our District, via the Ashfield Federation for Tenants and Residents Associations (AFTRA) and their associated member groups, Tenant and Residents Associations (TRA's)

Further to consultation with tenants and residents and where resources permit, AHL will continue to provide opportunity for all tenants and residents to become involved via our commitment to local events

66. The emphasis on the Gateway and the membership of the gateway presents the risk that the focus is mostly on tenant involvement for older people and the establishment of the mini-gateway reinforces this.

67. So the second main finding of the report is that the dominance of older people in tenant involvement is a disincentive to younger people becoming involved. More needs to be done to attract younger people to have an effective voice and we believe that the low levels of digital inclusion engagement apparent from our survey to be part of the problem.

Communications

68. Discussion at two meetings touched on the quality of telephone communications. It was clear that service users found telephone answering waiting times were unacceptable when contacting the council if a direct dial number is not known. This is also our experience.

69. Service users told us that all reception and front line staff were generally helpful and efficient.

70. On line communication is in our view part of a wider set of issues which were considered in the previous section on tenant involvement.

Shortages of council housing.

71. A further theme that was picked up in many meetings was the shortage of council housing. Many picked up on our remarks about demographic change which would increase the number of older people with housing and support needs. Meetings also picked up on shortages of family housing and smaller homes for single non pensioners and couples. One resident called for improved public consultation when new build housing is envisaged. Another meeting felt that social housing subsidised from new build market housing should be managed by the council or Ashfield Homes as housing associations had poor tenant involvement and charged too much rent. At the time of our investigation we noted only a handful of dwellings being available for letting in the property shop.

72. The need for more homes was highlighted by many respondents to our survey. Discussion with officers of Ashfield Homes and Ashfield Council highlighted changing patterns of demand and the mismatch between the stock and the needs of people seeking to live in it. These discussions did not provide us with an answer to the question as to why Ashfield Homes had not provided new build housing, or entered into management agreements to provide social housing arising from new build housing S106 agreements.

73. The issue is addressed in Ashfield Homes' delivery plan.

Selected text from Ashfield Homes Delivery Plan 2015/6 – new build housing.

Page 4, Local Context (edited by us)

AHL is a key contributor towards ADC's strategic priorities and recognises that its ability to contribute is dependent on a number of factors including:

Commitment to making Affordable housing available within our local community and working with partners to achieve this.

EC5: Ensuring availability of appropriate, affordable housing Quality of Life Result (Outcome)
Appropriate mix of housing types available to meet need Reduction in empty homes

Work with ADC on potential new build and development strategies (including the development of brown field sites) as requested by ADC.

74. There would appear to be no policy constraint on Ashfield Homes in bringing forward proposals to achieve supply from new build or management agreements.

75. Based upon a number of responses from officers of both organisations, our third key finding is that there seems to be little ambition or synergy between the two organisations to co-operate and use Ashfield Homes' skills to improve supply through new build housing or management agreements.

Key findings and conclusions

76. A contributor to one of our meetings with TRA's said 'if it aint broke don't fix it'. What is the evidence is broke? The consultation has revealed a few service delivery problems but these should be put into perspective. There will always be some delay in resolving some repair issues especially when they involve dampness. Some of the services that appear to perform less well than others are dependent on outcomes so it is understandable that service users are unhappy with the service if for example they are not offered the tenancy they have bid for. Overall the evidence suggests that Ashfield Homes delivers a housing management service that is valued by its customers.

77. However the consultation process led to the identification of an underlying set of issues which need to be addressed if the housing service is to address the changing needs of its customers. These are governance and enabling rather than service delivery issues.

78. Firstly inter-agency working, the case study and our consultation has revealed a weakness in interagency working. Also we were concerned that other agencies did not fully co-operate



with this consultation particularly when it was clearly in the interests of their service users for them to engage with the council.

79. Secondly there is a failure to achieve a meaningful and enduring engagement with younger customers. We had to go to great lengths to obtain information from younger service users. We had plenty of engagement with older service users who thought that this consultation was about whether Ashfield Homes would be retained as their service provider. They would not turn their minds to the quality of service. It is very clear that this group of people do not want the Council to take the housing management service back in house. TRA leaders told us that there is no reason for younger people to engage because the service is good, the houses have been brought up to a modern standard and younger people have not had to fight for tenant involvement or a decent quality service like they did. We think there is some truth in this. We also believe that the consultation was not compelling to respondents because by its very nature it is soft market testing. There was no make or break debate or decision to be made.
80. Thirdly, the failure to work together to improve the future supply of additional social housing is of major importance to future service users. Everything points to the urgent need to increase supply of social rented housing. Ashfields policy context is beyond the scope of this consultation but we have been unable to pinpoint the barrier preventing Ashfield Homes with its building construction expertise and labour force not being part of the solution. If new social rented house building is a policy priority then at the very least we would consider that Ashfield Homes be given the opportunity to prove its capability in this area. Unless there is a way of increasing the size of the management portfolio then the housing management operation whoever runs it will need to be scaled down to the point that its overheads cannot be funded unless service quality suffers.
81. In summary the consultation has revealed 3 key findings that will need addressing by the council and Ashfield Homes if the service is to move forward.

3 Key findings

The case study, evidence from our survey and stakeholder consultation suggests that inter agency working is an issue to be addressed especially in the policy area of Community Protection and Community Safety.

The dominance of older people in tenant involvement is a disincentive to younger people becoming involved. More needs to be done to attract younger people to have an effective voice and we believe that the low levels of digital inclusion engagement apparent from our survey to be part of the problem.

There seems to be little ambition or synergy between the two organisations to co-operate and use Ashfield Homes' skills to improve supply through new build housing or management agreements.