

High Life – Calling tower block TMOs!

If you are part of a TMO managing a tower block estate – or you work with one – then read on. Any tenants' organisation covering high-rise properties will know that this form of housing requires careful handling, and over the last four years the Sustainable Tower Blocks Initiative (STBI) has been working to increase understanding of the approach needed to deliver decent high-rise homes.

The STBI is now looking for people who know about community action in tower blocks to take part in an exciting new project. The idea is to help make your experience count more widely by learning from it and sharing it with other high-rise residents.

We'll need a summary of your project or experiences. You'll have the opportunity to talk through important issues with representatives from other tower blocks. Lessons from these case studies will be included in a guide to action on high-rise estates. This will be based around priorities chosen by residents; for instance: developing community initiatives, getting better facilities and services, allocations, or grounds and gardens. The guide will offer advice on key issues, and points of contact for further support. We also hope to pick up on any findings for policy-makers.

Each group will receive £500 in return for their input. There should be other benefits for those involved:



- Co-operation with other groups addressing similar issues.
- Opportunity to analyse and learn from experiences of their own and similar groups.
- Opportunity to present their views on high-rise policy issues.
- Continued involvement in the Sustainable Tower Blocks Initiative.
- Opportunity to influence a government-backed project on high-rise refurbishment.

- Recognition and promotion of their work.

If you would like to be involved, or would like more information, please contact Toby Gale of the STBI on 0161 881 5176, email stbi@cdf.org.uk – as soon as possible.

The project is being co-ordinated by the STBI with the Community Development Foundation. It is funded by a grant from the Shell Better Britain Campaign.

ABOUT BEING BIG!

The average number of homes managed by TMOs in England is under 400. In last year's Autumn issue of the TMO Magazine we looked at the Tanner House Co-op in Southwark that manages just 25 flats, and the advantages of small scale.

The Kensington and Chelsea TMO manages the entire housing stock of that London Borough. Tenants in Hackney are considering creating a TMO of 4000 dwellings in response to concern about

housing management arrangements in their area of East London. Across the country there are 14 TMOs that manage over 1000 homes.

Some would argue that the strengths of TMOs are born out of being local and small scale. So are there advantages for a large TMO? How big can an organisation be before it loses the essential characteristics that define it as a TMO? Your views please!



Something for the next issue of the TMO Magazine?

If you have a contribution to make to a future issue please contact magazine@tmonatfed.com or ring 01704 227053.

The NFTMO works on behalf of EMBs, Tenant Management Co-ops and all forms of TMO. The TMO Magazine is published by the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations Ltd. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the NFTMO. The Magazine is for and about Estate Management Boards, Tenant Management Co-operatives and all other forms of Tenant Management Organisations.

• THE TMO MAGAZINE IS DESIGNED BY RICHARD PEARSON / E-MAIL: RICHARD@PENGUINBOY.NET •

The TMO Magazine

CELEBRATING SUCCESS!



Delegates at last month's annual conference of the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations heard a series of presentations celebrating the achievements of TMOs around the country.

Chair Terry Edis told the 120 delegates at Stoke Rochford Hall that TMOs had shown they could succeed over the long term but still seem to be underestimated by government and the housing and regeneration professions. He said that most TMO housing management performance had been outstanding but that in addition TMOs often promoted much wider community initiatives.

The conference heard about a range of projects including a sports hall developed by

Bloomsbury EMB in Birmingham, a choice based lettings scheme at Bushbury Hill in Wolverhampton and a community TV channel at the Carpenters TMO in East.

Alongside the good news there were some warnings about the long-term future of TMOs in Housing Association property. Ed Isaacs of Partners in Change told the conference that research for the NFTMO had shown that few if any new TMOs were developing in the RSL sector.

The NFTMO Annual General Meeting was held during the weekend. The executive committee elections filled all vacancies giving a 26-person committee that is stronger and more representative than ever. (Full details inside).

YOUR TMO MAY NOT BE A FEDERATION MEMBER!

Please check that your TMO is an NFTMO member. Copies of this Magazine are at present sent free to all TMOs but soon Federation publications and services will be available ONLY to member TMOs. A membership application form is available at our website WWW.TMONATFED.COM or by ringing 01704 227053.

TENANT EMPOWERMENT GRANTS CUT

Funding for council tenants to exercise their Right to Manage should not be affected by a 10% cut in the Tenant Empowerment Grant budget that was recently announced by the ODPM. The ODPM is, however, interested in looking at ways to make the Right to Manage process quicker and less expensive.

The £500,000 cut in this year's budget will mean fewer Options Studies and a cut in promotion work by Section 16 Agencies. A planned pilot programme of regional tenant training has been put on ice. The NFTMO has agreed to a 10% cut in its own Section 16 Grant for this year. The Executive Committee stressed that this was agreed reluctantly but in recognition of the support that the ODPM has given to the Federation in recent years.

At the same time the ODPM confirmed that it had cut £2 million from the Housing Corporation's innovation and good practice (IGP) budget for 2004. The IGP budget includes community training and enabling grants for getting residents involved. It is this pot of money that can potentially fund tenants' groups that want to develop a TMO in the housing association sector, although it has rarely been used for that purpose.

We must wait to see if these changes in spending priorities are early warning of a reduction in Government support for community control of housing.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Ballot Results and Controversy (Page 2) • Such a Good Idea! (Pages 3) • Conference and AGM Reports (Centre pages) •
- HOLTS - 10 Years On (Page 6) • Lettings Survey (Page 7) • Training Diary (Page 7) • High Rise Living and Big TMOs (Back page) •

MIXED RESULTS AND CONTROVERSY IN RECENT TMO BALLOTS

Right to Manage rules mean that to develop a TMO in council housing from scratch a group must pass three tests of tenant opinion. The last of these, the development ballot, takes place when the training is complete and a management agreement has been negotiated. The regulations require that the majority of tenants entitled to vote in the development ballot must vote yes if the TMO is to go on to manage their housing.

It seems to be illogical that the ballot for a change in management of council housing requires a higher level of tenant support than a ballot about a change of ownership. Yet this obvious inconsistency has been highlighted again by the results of TMO ballots conducted in recent months.

No more so than at Shire Green in Sheffield where 84 per cent of tenants who voted were in favour of the TMO taking over management of the estate. Unfortunately, although 1700 votes were cast, the 55% turn out meant that the TMO fell 57 votes short of their target. First Call consultant Tom Hopkins points out the injustice. " Had this been a stock transfer ballot then the result would have been declared as evidence of strong support for the proposal. Things weren't helped by a strike in the local post office that disrupted the ballot. The TMO have signatures from 58 tenants who did not receive a ballot paper but would have supported the TMO." The Shire Green tenants have not given up hopes of local control and look set to pursue plans for a community based stock transfer with the potential for a TMO under the new RSL ownership.

Another Right to Manage development project to fall at the last fence was at the Digmoor estate in Skelmersdale. The Digmoor Estate Management Board has operated for over a decade using staff seconded from



DIGMOOR ESTATE - RTM BALLOT LOST

West Lancashire District Council but served a Right to Manage notice in order to directly employ staff and take greater control of budgets. The District Council decided to adopt a neutral position for the ballot but the local Labour party candidates and councillors ran a last minute No campaign. Using leaflets and newspaper ads they questioned the accountability and competence of the EMB committee and wrongly claimed that Digmoor would miss out on investment and suffer rent increases if tenants supported the proposal.

The no campaign achieved its aim leaving Digmoor EMB Chairperson Cath Quine MBE angry and bemused. Cath's tireless work in the community during the 1980s and 90s helped to revive the fortunes of Digmoor. "Some of the councillors who have undermined us during the ballot have been members of the EMB committee in the past and used us to build a political platform for themselves. I have written to the Deputy Prime Minister asking why, after a Labour Government has given us grant to develop this proposal over several years, it is possible for local party members to destroy it in a few

days in order to further their political careers."

There was better news for the SHOUT TMO in Manchester. Following their successful development ballot the TMO will go live later this year, managing about 175 homes in Harpurhey. It will be Manchester City Council's first live TMO and represents a long-term success for a tenants group that was originally formed to oppose proposals to demolish their estate.

Also in the Manchester area there was an interesting outcome to a continuation ballot of tenants at the Apple Tree Court TMO in Salford. The TMO has been under fire following a very critical Ombudsman's report and Council intervention. The TMO was suspended while an investigation took place and newspaper reports had suggested that the TMO had little or no support amongst its tenants. But this spring a secret independent ballot of tenants conducted by Engage (CDS Housing Association) resulted in a 74% turnout and an 89% vote in favour of the TMO continuing to manage the tower block.

STAND UP FOR COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HOUSING



Roy Read of Bloomsbury EMB tells us about a new group that has been set up in Birmingham.

The recommendations of the Birmingham Housing Commission chaired by Professor Anne Power represent a real opportunity for the growth of TMOs, housing co-operatives and other community controlled housing organisations in the City. We now need to make sure that the Council continues to support this approach.

SUCH is a new network of housing organisations, groups and individuals who believe that community control in its various forms represents the best way forward for 'social housing' in Birmingham. The group will be promoting the benefits of community controlled housing in terms of sustainability, accountability, community cohesion and regeneration.

Those of us who are involved in the group know that not all tenants will want to take control of their housing and that community controlled options are not necessarily the easiest or the quickest solutions. However, we believe that all tenants should have the opportunity to consider the benefits of community control and to choose a community controlled housing option if they so wish.

Our main objectives are as follows:

- To provide a supportive network for community controlled housing

organisations (including TMOs and housing co-operatives) in Birmingham based on solidarity, mutual support and the sharing of experience and best practice.

- To promote and raise the profile of community controlled housing within Birmingham.
- To make available information about the experience, benefits, rewards and challenges of being involved in a community controlled housing organisation.
- To gain wide-spread support for community controlled housing amongst politicians, policy-makers and the wider community.
- To ensure that in considering the future of 'social housing' in Birmingham, all tenants have a genuine opportunity to consider community controlled options on a level playing field with other options.
- To ensure that in making decisions about the future of 'social housing' in Birmingham, tenants are in the driving seat.
- To create an environment in which the Council and other public bodies positively encourage and support existing and developing community controlled housing organisations.

We aim to make a positive contribution to the housing scene in Birmingham and would encourage other like-minded organisations, groups and individuals in the area to join us.

NEWS IN BRIEF

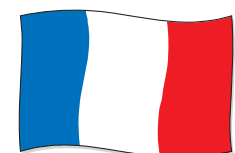
Gates of Heaven!

Sarah Chapman (pictured) told the NFTMO Conference how Blenheim Gardens RMO in South London solved a problem with motorbikes on the estate with careful use of gates. The RMO has now turned its attention to the need to provide alternative activities and facilities for local young people.



Vive La Federation!

During a recent visit to London members of the French Federation of Regie to Quartier (CNLRO) met with NFTMO



representatives. The Regie to Quartier are similar to our own Resident Services Organisations but operate on a much wider scale in social housing neighbourhoods all over France. A learning exchange has been proposed and the NFTMO has been invited to join a European network of like-minded organisations.

Setback for Federation ASB Proposal

The NFTMO failed in its bid to get National Exemplar Grant Funding for producing a TMO Good Practice Guide to dealing with anti-social behaviour. The executive committee intend to look for other potential funding for a project that they see as high priority.

EAST LONDON TMO NETWORK PROPOSED



Jeremy Carson of Friday Hill TMO in Chingford writes:-

Although there are more than 20 TMOs with East London postcodes we do not seem to have the same local support network that TMOs enjoy in some other parts of London. Perhaps that is because we do not have the same concentration of TMOs in any one Borough as they do in places like Lambeth, Westminster, Southwark and Camden. For example, the TMO I work for is one of only two in the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

As a new member of the NFTMO national executive one of my aims is to increase the contact between TMOs in East London so that we can support and learn from each other. There are TMOs spread around the Boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Newham,

Redbridge and Havering. I will be getting in touch to see if there is any interest in an initial informal meeting.

Set up in 1998 Friday Hill TMO manages almost 1000 council homes. The TMO employs eight staff and has developed an effective repairs service as well as promoting activities in the estate's community centre. Major improvements are needed to the homes. The Council has formed an ALMO but unfortunately it has not been awarded 2 stars. As a result the TMO is actively investigating options for a community based stock transfer.

You can contact me on 020 8523 9433 or e-mail me at jeremy@fridayhilltmo.demon.co.uk.

VISIT THE NFTMO WEBSITE AT WWW.TMONATFED.COM

Find out more about the NFTMO and the services it offers as well as up to date information on TMOs, essential documents, guides to download and links to other useful websites.

NATIONAL TMO CONFERENCE 2004



AGM REPORT

The NFTMO Annual General Meeting held on Sunday May 23rd was the first since the Federation registered as a company limited by guarantee. The committee elections filled all vacancies and leaves the NFTMO with the following strengthened executive:-

MIDLANDS REGION – 6 PLACES

Terry Edis – Burrowes Street TMC
 Bill Edwards – Sandbank TMO
 Helen Norton – Bushbury Hill EMB
 Roy Read – Bloomsbury EMB
 Val Nicholls – Delves EMO
 Paul MacManomy – Druids Heath TMC

NORTHERN REGION – 6 PLACES

Tony Brankin – Brunshaw EMB
 Suzanne Hall – Windsor and Albion Co-op
 John Challinor – Bacup and Stacksteads TMO
 Henry Gordon – Holts Village EMB
 Chris Girlow – Wisewood EMB
 Michael Brennan – Bentley House Estate

SOUTHERN REGION – 6 PLACES

Mike Bailey – South Hampstead Housing Co-op
 Christopher Wright – Scottish Towers Co-op
 Godson Agomuo – Two Towers TMO
 Karen Royce – Cranston Estate TMO
 Kenneth Campbell – South Acton RAG
 Jenny Dimmock – Walpole EMB

Co-opted:-

Steven Kerley – Godwin and Crowndale TMC
 Jeremy Carson – Friday Hill TMO
 Paul Taylor – Parkhill Estate Tenants and Residents

Honorary President, Cath Quine

In addition the committee includes:-

- Independent Co-optees: Keith Proctor and Ursula Barrington
- One Nominee each from from CCH (Caroline Collins) and LACOG

MEMBERSHIP FEES

The AGM agreed a recommendation from the executive committee that membership fees for the next 12 months be increased to 20 pence per dwelling managed per year up to a maximum of £200. This should provide an income of about £5000 for the period.



PLANNING STARTS FOR 2005!

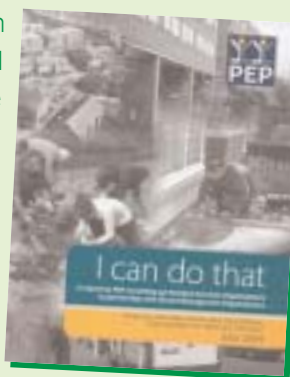
The 2004 National TMO conference took place at Stoke Rochford Hall near Grantham over the weekend of May 21st to May 23rd.

120 delegates attended representing TMOs from around the country. The event is thought to be the biggest gathering of TMO members for many years. The impressive country house setting and the sunny weather made for an enjoyable and relaxed conference. Platform speakers included Ed Isaacs of Partners in Change and Keith Proctor of Regenerate, plus a series of mini presentations from TMOs that highlighted a diversity of activities and achievements. The 12 workshops included sessions on TMO stock transfer options, ALMOS, involving younger people, regeneration partnerships, choice-based lettings, anti-social behaviour and employing TMO staff.

The NFTMO executive committee will now start work on planning the 2005 conference!

TMOs SET UP RESIDENT SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

A criticism sometimes made of English TMOs is that they do not always take full advantage of their opportunity to create local jobs through the budgets and services they manage. A conference workshop run by PEP's Tony Baker told the story of TMOs who have shown what is possible. PEP have published a report called "I can do that" about the setting up of Residents Services Organisations by TMOs in London and Birmingham. A copy of the report, price £12, can be obtained from PEP on 0161 877 3223.



Exhibitors at the NFTMO Conference included Co-op Housing Integrated Computer Systems, First Call Consultants, Birmingham Co-operative Housing Services, Regenerate, Innovation Into Action, PEP Ltd, Bushbury Hill EMB and Acclaim Consultants.

CAR CRASH CAN'T STOP TMO DELEGATES!

Tony Cox of the Beechwood and Ballantyne EMB ran a workshop at the conference called "Community Transfer Against the Odds". Well it was against the odds that he even got to the conference after he and his three colleagues were involved in a car crash en route to Grantham.

Tony and fellow committee members Janet Dixon, Eileen Turner and Vi Croft had already done half a day's work in the EMB office when they left Birkenhead at lunchtime. At 3.10pm they were involved in an accident. The car was a write-off and had to be towed away! Undaunted they got a train from Crewe and arrived at Stoke Rochford at 9.30 that evening.



Tony Cox and Janet Dixon see the funny side.

Then it was off to Grantham hospital for a precautionary check-up and a take away meal from a Chinese restaurant before getting to bed at 1.30am. The conference started after breakfast the next day and Tony presented an enjoyable and aptly named workshop!

INTEREST IN TMO LED STOCK TRANSFER RSL



Many conference delegates were particularly interested in the workshop about the WATMOS approach to stock transfer. TMOs in Walsall formed their own RSL rather than transfer to an existing Housing Association Group. A number of delegates left the conference wondering if their own TMO might be able to help create or transfer to a TMO led RSL like WATMOS.

WHEN SHOULD THE LANDLORD INTERVENE?

A conference workshop run by Gerard Caulker of Lambeth Council discussed the thorny issue of council intervention if a TMO appears to be in trouble – particularly when governance is involved.

Landlords are criticised both when they do interfere in the internal affairs of a TMO and when they sit back and do nothing. So what are the ground rules for positive monitoring and appropriate intervention by landlord organisations? The NFTMO and LACOG (Local Authority Co-op Officers Group) have agreed to work together to develop some good practice guidelines for councils and housing associations in these circumstances. If you have any ideas or views please get in touch with the Federation.

CALL FOR MANCHESTER COMMUNITY GATEWAY

Cae Os of Bentley House TMO in Manchester told the conference that his group was part of a local alliance campaigning for a Community Gateway option to be added to the choices being put to council tenants in Manchester. Cae said that the stock options proposals announced by the City Council in December do not guarantee opportunities for community control at the neighbourhood level.

HOLTS VILLAGE 10 YEARS ON

If you are looking for tenant management with a spectacular view then Holts Village in Oldham takes some beating. The Estate Management Board there manages over 800 council homes that were built in the 1950s in the foothills of the Pennines. You can walk off the estate straight on to the rolling moors.

EMB Treasurer Celia Hutchinson has lived on the estate since it was built and sees the location as a big selling point in a region where demand for some council housing is still weak. "Some people prefer to be closer to the town centre but for many people it's a beautiful place to live. The cost of public transport is an issue," she adds "but buses are now more frequent and reliable than in the past."

The EMB do accompanied viewings with new applicants so committee members get a good feel for what people like and don't like about the housing. Houses are popular, flats less so. The less popular properties tend to be occupied by people who see Holts as a short-term solution. As a result Holts endures an average 30% turnover of tenancies each year and a huge bill for management and repairs when homes become empty. A limited form of Choice Based lettings has been operating for a year but the Board think it is too early to say if it will make a positive difference to demand patterns.



Holts is maybe unique amongst TMOs in being currently involved in an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and a Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Working with the ALMO, First Choice Homes, has been a learning experience for the EMB and the Council. The EMB is now renegotiating its management agreement and has at times found itself meeting only with ALMO staff. "We had to make the point that our agreement was with the council and not with First Choice Homes," recalls secretary Mary Flynn. There have been positive spin-offs from the ALMO too. "We now have repairs operatives based on the estate again," explains committee member Henry Gordon

"and that has resulted in a much faster response on repairs. Tenants are starting to notice the difference."

Meanwhile the Council was in the process of considering bids for the PFI contract to refurbish and manage 110 bungalows on the estate. Deputy Chair Chris Wright says that the EMB will expect to be included; "Our aim is to work closely with the successful bidder although details of our involvement are yet to be agreed." Ten years after they first started managing the estate there are plenty of new challenges facing the EMB in the next decade.

BACKLASH OR BREAKTHROUGH?

What is the future of tenant empowerment?

ATIC POLICY CONFERENCE 2004

Join the debate with:

Gordon Perry -
Chief Executive, Kensington & Chelsea TMO
Chris Wood -
Director of Housing, Newham

Wolverhampton, 6 September 2004

Details on www.atic.org.uk or
phone 0800 389 1306

TMO Tenants as Neighbourhood Workers?

The PEP Charitable Trust is seeking partners for its 2005 Neighbourhood Workers Programme, in which Local Authorities, Registered Social Landlords and other employers such as TMOs are being offered support to enable local tenants and residents to be employed as Neighbourhood Workers in their areas.

The PEP Trust is offering free places on the second round of an innovative training and support programme for Neighbourhood Workers. They expect there to be considerable variation in the role each of the Neighbourhood Workers takes on depending upon local circumstances, priorities and objectives. Generally, Neighbourhood Workers will work to develop relationships between landlords, residents and other community / regeneration projects within their neighbourhoods. They will seek to build bridges to improve service delivery and project outputs for all local partners.

For more information please see http://www.pep.org.uk/index.asp?page=PEP_trust_neos

The deadline for applications is 12 July 2004.

Midlands NFTMO Regional Committee

A Midlands region committee of the NFTMO has now been established. The secretary is Michael Hanley of Druids Heath TMC and he can be contacted on 0121 430 6995. The next meeting is on June 20th in Walsall.

Lettings Survey Shows Changing TMO Role

Eighty per cent of TMOs are involved in allocations and lettings and most of the remainder would like to be. TMOs believe that their involvement in lettings can help create a more cohesive community and better matching of applicants to homes.

This picture emerges from the interim findings of a survey carried out by the NFTMO and PPCR consultants during the spring. Over forty TMOs returned survey forms by late April. Two thirds of those organisations where "Right to Manage TMOs" formed since 1994.

Only half of the TMOs keep their own local waiting list. Surprisingly less than fifty per cent are allowed to offer an empty property to a transfer applicant within their estate without giving the local authority first option.

Forty per cent of TMOs said that their role in allocations and lettings had changed since they started managing. One of the changes that TMOs mentioned was the introduction of choice based lettings.

One quarter of TMOs are involved in choice based lettings to some extent and experiences so far do vary. We can expect the initiative to affect more TMOs in the future as the Government is committed to the view that councils and RSLs should offer more choice to applicants for housing.

Work is still continuing on the survey. If your TMO has not returned a survey form but would like to do so then you should contact Liz Michael at PPCR on 0800 317066.

JOIN THE TMO BENCHMARKING NETWORK!



London benchmarking workshop.

The NFTMO Benchmarking network is now up and running after a series of successful regional workshops in the spring. The Benchmarking network, developed with the support of HouseMark and an Innovation into Action grant, will enable TMOs to compare performance and learn from each other. The Benchmarking involves some TMO self-assessment and covers housing management, finance and governance (committee/participation) aspects of performance. Details are available at www.tmonatfed.com or by ringing 01704 227053.

Training Diary : June & July 2004

Training is essential to the long term health of your TMO. Here is just a sample of training opportunities that are coming up soon. If you want to advertise events in future issues of the TMO Magazine then E Mail details to magazine@tmonatfed.com

COURSE / EVENT	DATE	VENUE	CONTACT
Option Appraisals – How tenants can be involved	28-30 June	Chester	Trafford Hall
Allocation & lettings – The challenges	2-4 July	Manchester	PEP
Staff Recruitment and Management	3 July	London	Martina Gavan City West Homes 0800 731 3246
Freebies	6-7 July	Chester	Trafford Hall
Right Person, Right job - Recruiting and Selecting people	8 July	London	TPAS
A fresh approach to working with your wider community	9-11 July	Chester	PEP
Writing and Editing for Community Newspapers	10-11 July	Chester	Trafford Hall
Getting involved in choice-based lettings	12-13 July	Chester	Trafford Hall
Advanced chairing skills	15 July	London	TPAS
An introduction to housing finance	17 July	London	PEP
Interview Skills for Voluntary Groups	19-20 July	Chester	Trafford Hall
Decent Homes Standard – Matching residents' aspirations with property needs	23-25 July	Maidstone	PEP
Managing a Project	27 July	Manchester	TPAS
Investment Options for Social Housing	3-5 September	Bristol	PEP
Getting the Best from your Contractors	10-12 September	Bristol	PEP
Committee Skills	16 September	Manchester	TPAS
Working in Partnership	17-19 September	Derbyshire	PEP
Dealing with tenant burnout	20-21 September	Milton Keynes	TPAS
Managing Your Neighbourhood	30 September	Nottingham	PEP

Contacts : PEP , Sandra Young 020 7281 3178 ; TPAS , Debbie Lucas, 0161 868 3500 ; Trafford Hall , Natalie Bradbury 01244 300246