THE FORUM – NEXT STEPS

HfN has had, for some time, a Tenants Forum which has played a role in engagement between HfN and its customers. The Forum has made a proposal to HfN’s Strategic Board to reconstitute the organisation as an independent body (the “Northumberland Tenants and Leaseholders Forum”) with responsibility to support tenants and leaseholders and to act for HfN in aspects of customer liaison.

The Strategic Board, in a meeting on 26 March 2014, agreed to fund the independent forum up to a value of £36,000 for their first year of operation. The funding was agreed subject to addressing concerns that the New Forum was established as an inclusive organisation, open to all of HfN’s customer base.

The Forum worked hard to develop and present to the Board their proposals for the Independent Forum.

In the period between the disbandment of the old Tenants Forum and the establishment of the Independent Forum, some members of the previous organisation have been operating as a shadow board. The shadow board has been tasked by HfN with developing proposals, including an election process, to ensure that the Independent Forum would be open, inclusive and representative.

We are concerned that, although the shadow board has begun to plan a number of events running through to October 2014 it has not yet begun to open the new forum up to wider membership. This concern is exacerbated by a number of issues that have come to our attention which make us question whether the members of the shadow board are committed to serving all of our customers. These issues include:

- Disputes within the Shadow Forum that have led to the exclusion of some individuals from the on-going activities of the group;
- An approach by a tenant to the Shadow Forum to get involved that was rejected;
- An unwillingness to establish links with an owner-occupier who wanted to develop a formal group of our customers in his local area; and
- Intelligence from some existing TARAs that they will not work with the members of the shadow board.

Recognising the importance of an independent forum, and in order to drive the agenda forward, we have decided that HfN will take responsibility for running the process to advertise the New Forum to our customers and creating the New Forum and its executive. Of course, this process will be open to members of the Shadow Forum.

Whilst this process is underway, it will not be helpful for the Shadow Forum to hold events. Therefore, the meetings and conference that you are currently planning should be cancelled. We will make arrangements to refund any expenditure you have incurred to date and to wind up the Forum’s bank account.