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TENANT INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNANCE: MODELS AND PRACTICES



Supporting™  
Communities  
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**Housing**  
Executive

# **Welcome and Background to the Project**

**Colm McDaid, Supporting Communities**

**David Mullins, University of Birmingham**



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# Tenant Involvement in Governance – Where next for Northern Ireland?

Three Half day workshops

Findings from State of the Art Review and  
Northern Ireland Case Studies

Peter Shanks, University of Birmingham

# State of the Art Review

- **What is the context in NI for tenant involvement in governance?**
- Desk review of 7 key policy documents
- Interviews with 24 stakeholders
- 3 Case studies of NIHE and HA approaches – strengths and gaps



<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/departments/social-policy-social-work/research/projects/2015/tenant-engagement-in-governance.aspx>

# Overview

- Policy and Strategic Context in NI
- Organisations & Infrastructure
- Tenant empowerment
- Barriers and succession planning
- Training and development
- Assessment and Evaluation
- 3 Case studies: Current strengths & gaps
- Discussion points

# Policy and Strategic Context



- Range of legislative and public policy drivers
- Social Housing Reform Programme
  - TP Strategy requires HAs to produce strategies
  - Regulation (consumer standard)
- NIHE Community Involvement Strategy
- NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy
- NIHE Community Safety Strategy
- NIHE Social Enterprise Strategy

## A Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland: 2015 to 2020

January 2016

Department for Social Development



# Organisations and Structures

## Housing Executive

- Driver for TP came from building estates where people didn't want to live
- Began as joint initiative between NIHE and NITAP in early 1980s
- Initially tentative due to political landscape
- Devolution and peace-funding resulted in more systematic engagement

## Housing Associations

- Developed organisational approaches
- Will regulation result in HAs adopting similar approaches?
- Some engagement by HA tenants with HCN and HA staff with NIHE interagency partnerships
- Perennial question – how to engage general needs tenants?

# Organisations and Structures

## Supporting Communities

- Empowering communities for 37 years; with 600 community groups
- Promotes and delivers community engagement through the HCN
- Now HA Development Officer
- Funded by NIHE with HAs procuring services on ad hoc basis
- ITO - resources, capacity and quality assurance
- Supporting Communities best placed organisation

## Housing Rights

- Specialist provider of independent housing advice
- Recently developed its work on TP (research; conferences) involving users to shape services and inform policy
- Distinct roles but complementary strategic fit between HR and SC
- HRs' work spans all tenures
- Successful conferences & joint work with SC



# Tenant Involvement Infrastructure

## Housing Executive

- NIHE community infrastructure realigned to new councils 13 Scrutiny Panels replaced 32 districts
- Scrutiny Panels feed into three Regional Forums
- Central Housing Forum meets with NIHE board biannually; lobbying role; Community Conference
- Four hard to reach forums (disability, BME, rural, youth)
- Interagency Partnerships and Task Teams
- £4m per year to service this infrastructure (plus 300 community lets at nil cost)
- **No tenants on the board of NIHE**

## Thoughts on restructuring

- Scrutiny Panels cover wider geographical areas, remit narrower than HCNs
- Fewer opportunities for tenants to raise community specific issues
- Links to grassroots groups and capacitated individuals reduced
- Information conduit missing a key tier
- Loss of peer learning
- Tenant scrutiny - tenants v residents debate
- **In practice HCNs have been preserved at more local level where tenants resisted consolidation (both case studies)**

# Housing Association Infrastructure

- Diverse starting points
- Tendency to tenant forums and scrutiny roles similar to NIHE
- Is smaller better?: How to support social capital in small schemes?
- Limited role for residents in design and development of new schemes
- Integral partners in shared futures
- Around half of HAs have tenant BMs on committees but fewer on main boards – is this reducing with mergers & scaling up?
- Is business emphasis crowding out community input?
- Unique challenges for Supported Housing tenants



Apex HA Community Involvement Strategy



# Barriers & Enablers of involvement in governance

- ❖ Motivation - need to know why tenants don't engage?
- ❖ Narrow range of active participants; younger general needs and hard to reach tenants underrepresented
- ❖ Professionalisation of Governance & emphasis of certain kinds of skills & experience to manage risk
- ❖ Style of meetings and scope of agendas can be off-putting
- ❖ Is fear of para-militaries still a barrier to tenant empowerment?
- ❖ Why are there no housing co-ops in NI?
- ❖ Common Selection Scheme
- ✓ Change narrative to sell the benefits of tenant involvement
- ✓ Emphasise forms of involvement with direct benefits Social enterprise, jobs and training incentives
- ✓ Youth forums, shadow boards, succession planning, location & timing of meetings, child care costs
- ✓ Recognise added value that tenant experience brings
- ✓ Increase use of technology to complement face-to-face & engage 25-40 age group?
- ✓ Build on success of shared futures – develop safe models for devolved power
- ✓ Consider a wider range of models

# Training and Development

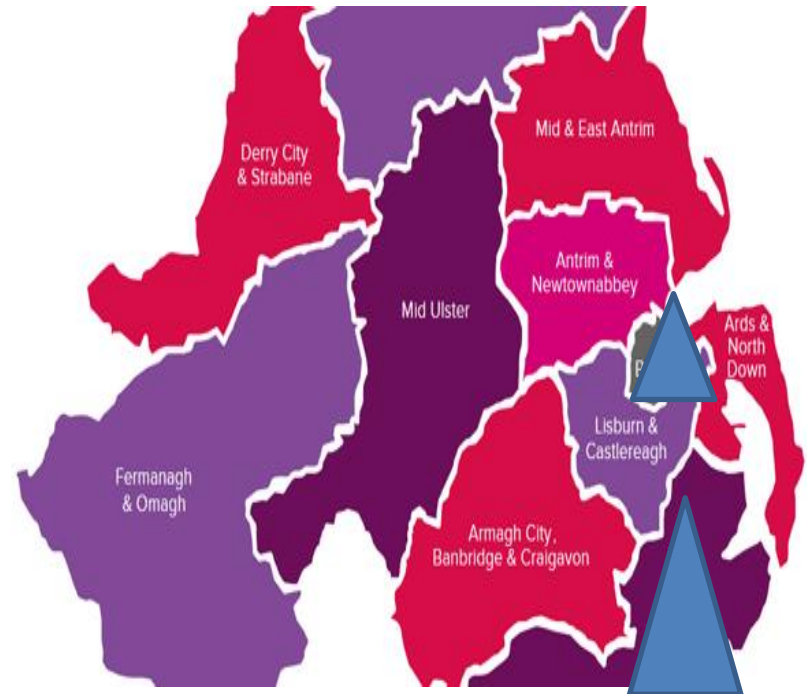
- Training on benefits of TP for staff and BMs
- Mainstreaming TP responsibilities
- Bespoke training that supports individuals needs
- More time and resources required to train those with learning disabilities
- Digital inclusion training
- Mentoring
- Succession planning



Habinteg Housing was the first Housing Association in Northern Ireland to undertake Supporting Communities' OCN Level 2 accredited Tenant Participation and Community Development

# Case Studies

- **3 case study reports**
  - Newry and Downpatrick Area Scrutiny Panel
  - West Belfast and Shankill Area Scrutiny Panel
  - Choice Housing Association



<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/departments/social-policy-social-work/research/projects/2015/tenant-engagement-in-governance.aspx>

# Case Studies: Current Strengths

- **Wide range of opportunities for involvement :**
  - Central and regional forums with direct links to decision-making bodies
  - Tenant scrutiny of landlord services
  - Menus of involvement enabling tenants to choose
  - Social enterprise models for local employment of tenants
- **Remarkable similarity in approaches being developed in NIHE and HAs**
  - Role of Supporting Communities & regulation
  - Some limited links between tenants of NIHE and HAs



# Case Studies: Current Gaps

- Few tenants at peak levels of corporate governance
- No local areas where tenants can control management of their estates
- No means for tenants to influence design and management of new schemes by forming groups prior to moving in
- Relationships with new councils are developing but currently no tenant voice





# Discussion Points

- What opportunities does the changing context offer for tenant involvement in governance?
- What are the current strengths of Tenant Involvement in Governance in Northern Ireland?
- What are the main barriers and enablers for the future?
- What can we learn from the case studies?
- Specific steps for NIHE, HAs and others
- What are the main gaps we might look to address from international models?



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# Tenant Involvement in Governance – Where next for Northern Ireland?

Three Half day workshops

Overview of International Models

David Mullins, University of Birmingham

# Overview

- **Evidence Review: What models have been developed in different countries?**
- **What gaps are we trying to fill?**
- **Building in involvement from the start**
- **Involving tenants in governance across a council area**
- **Building partnerships to involve residents in new housing coops**
- **Tenants and communities governing large landlord organisations**
- **Tenant Management Organisations: local management of existing estates**

# What models have been developed in different countries?

- Many and Magical
- Mutual models
- Tenant management organisations
- Social enterprise models
- Tenant led housing associations
- Tenant scrutiny
- Tenant Board membership
- **Its all about governance !**



# So many great models to choose from!



LEATHERMARKET

JMB



# Why Tenant Involvement in Governance Matters

An investment not a cost

The business benefits of tenant involvement



Tenants  
Leading Change

A Genuinely Tenant- led housing sector would be much harder to undermine

# What gaps are we trying to fill?

- Good NI menu exists but still some:
- Gaps at the local level
- Gaps at the organisation level
- Gaps at the local authority level



# Filling the Gaps

- Few tenants at peak levels of corporate governance
- No local areas where tenants can control management of their estates
- No means for tenants to influence design and management of new schemes by forming groups prior to moving in
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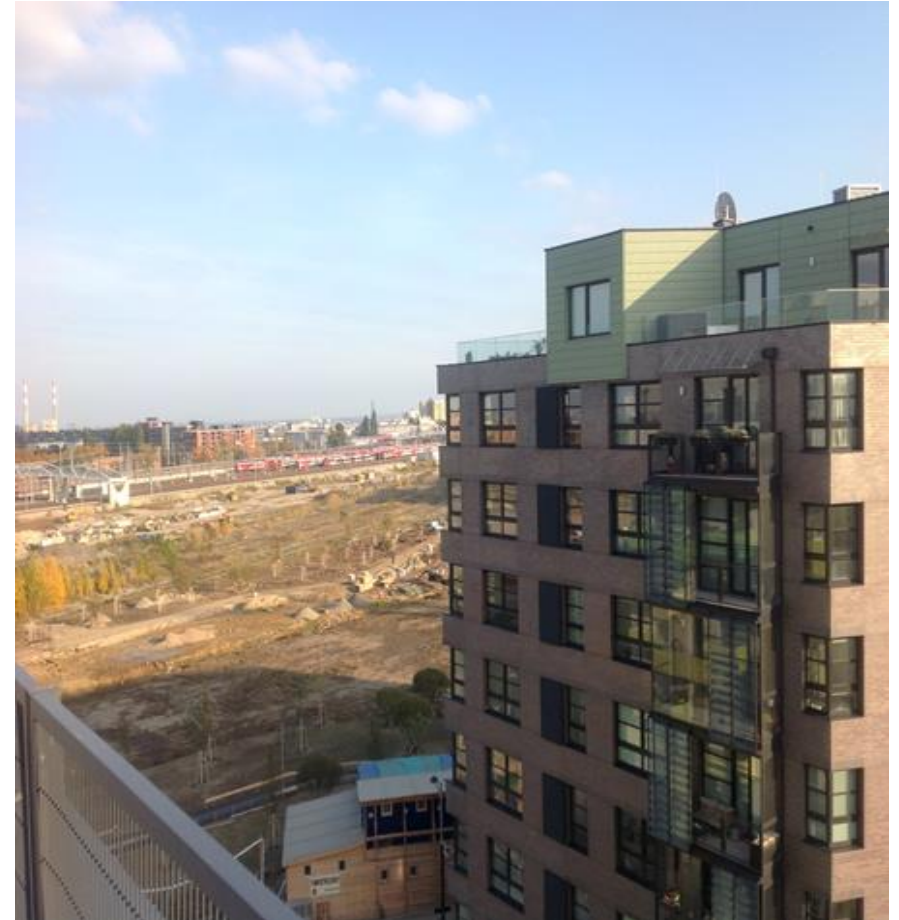
# Evidence Review and Typology

- Starting point for selection of models for reality check
- Search identified 70 academic & practice publications since 2000 on tenant involvement and governance in social/public/non-profit housing – 15 shortlisted for detailed analysis
- 4 Key themes: Boards, consumers/citizens, what's the problem?, scale and scope of involvement
- Typology 12 types and 6 possible models for exploration
  - Estate level, organisational level, Area level
  - Consumerism v control
  - Purpose, scale and scope of involvement
- 5 models presented here, 4 of which checked in workshop

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/departments/social-policy-social-work/research/projects/2015/tenant-engagement-in-governance.aspx>

# 1. Building in Involvement from the start

- New build as an opportunity
- New resident groups  
Influencing design and amenities
- Coming together as a community from start
- Building capacity to take control through advisers
- **Excellent example of building in involvement in Vienna through ‘developer competitions’ requiring ‘community building’ as part of all new schemes in city as in So-vie-So at Hauptbahnhof**
- **Why not in Northern Ireland?**



So-vie-So tenants benefit from sense of community and knowing your neighbours from the start –Richard Lang



# 3. Building partnerships to involve residents in new build co-ops

Start Together & Learn Together

- Government
- Local authorities
- Housing associations
- Local communities

25 new bespoke schemes to suit the needs of local people with community membership structure

**Welsh new build coops as part of housing targets in Programme for Government 2011-16, 16-21 a model that could be followed in NI?**



Wales Co-operative Centre

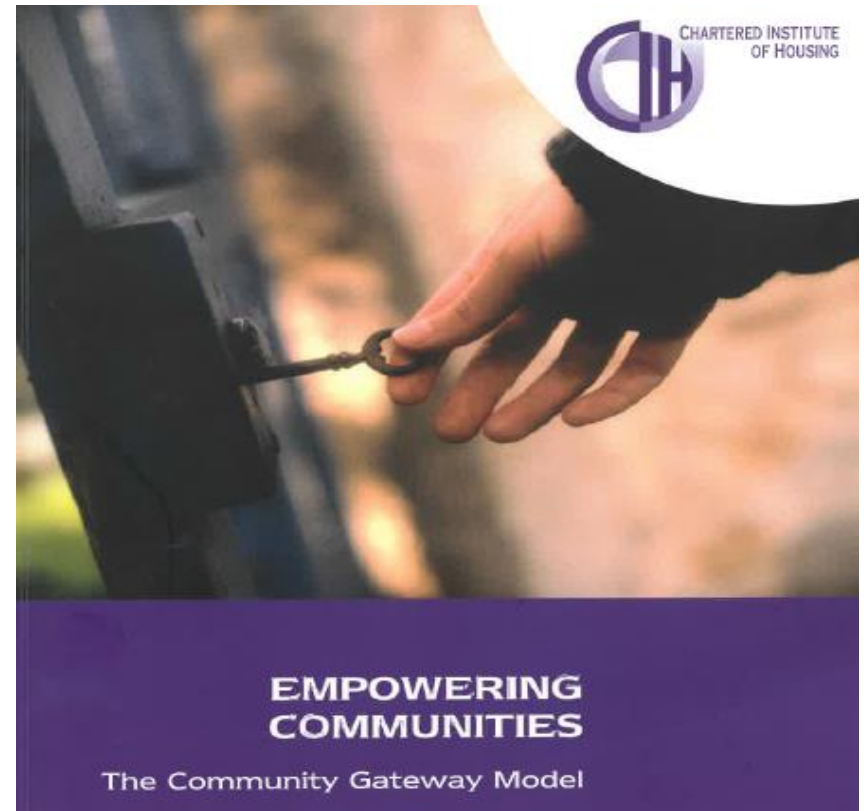


Research into the potential demand for co-operative housing in Wales

Residents did not know anything about co-operative housing at the outset, but were helped to develop their skills to govern their co-operatives as their homes were being built, starting a year or so before they moved in- CCCH & WCC.

# 4. Tenants and communities governing large landlords

- Extensive experience of tenants on boards of large landlords (Denmark, Scotland, England, Wales)
- Boost given by stock transfer in England, Scotland and Wales
- Some models enable tenants to be in control (community gateway, community mutuals)
- Skills and accountability criteria & tenant knowledge of service



By being involved we are ensuring that continuous improvement is at the heart of the housing service, and that it doesn't become a remote and unresponsive service as larger housing associations appear to be". Community Gateway tenants

# 5. A Fifth Model ? – TMOs - Tenant Management of Existing Estates

**Tenant Management Organisations run over 200 local authority estates in England**

- Robust locally focussed model - worked well for 20 years
- Devolved budgets & Improved management performance
- Chance to decide the issues that matter most to tenants locally

**Could this approach align with NIHE service transformation?**

- One step on from scrutiny panels?
- What are the barriers to local tenant control in NI?



Leathermarket JMB building new social rented housing on a garage site in shadow of the Shard after successfully managing 1500 Southwark Council homes for 20 years

# Recap Workshop Aims

- Develop new ideas for models that would work to increase tenant involvement in governance in Northern Ireland
- Build on existing strengths & success & local knowledge
- Reality check four models selected from international review that could fill gaps
- Look for best fit to changing NI context
- Draw on your experience to assess relevance





# Tenant Involvement in Governance – Where next for Northern Ireland?

Three Half day workshops

The Austrian Model - Building participation in to  
the development process: Developer  
competitions and ‘community building’

Richard Lang, University of Linz





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# The Austrian Model

## Building participation into the development process

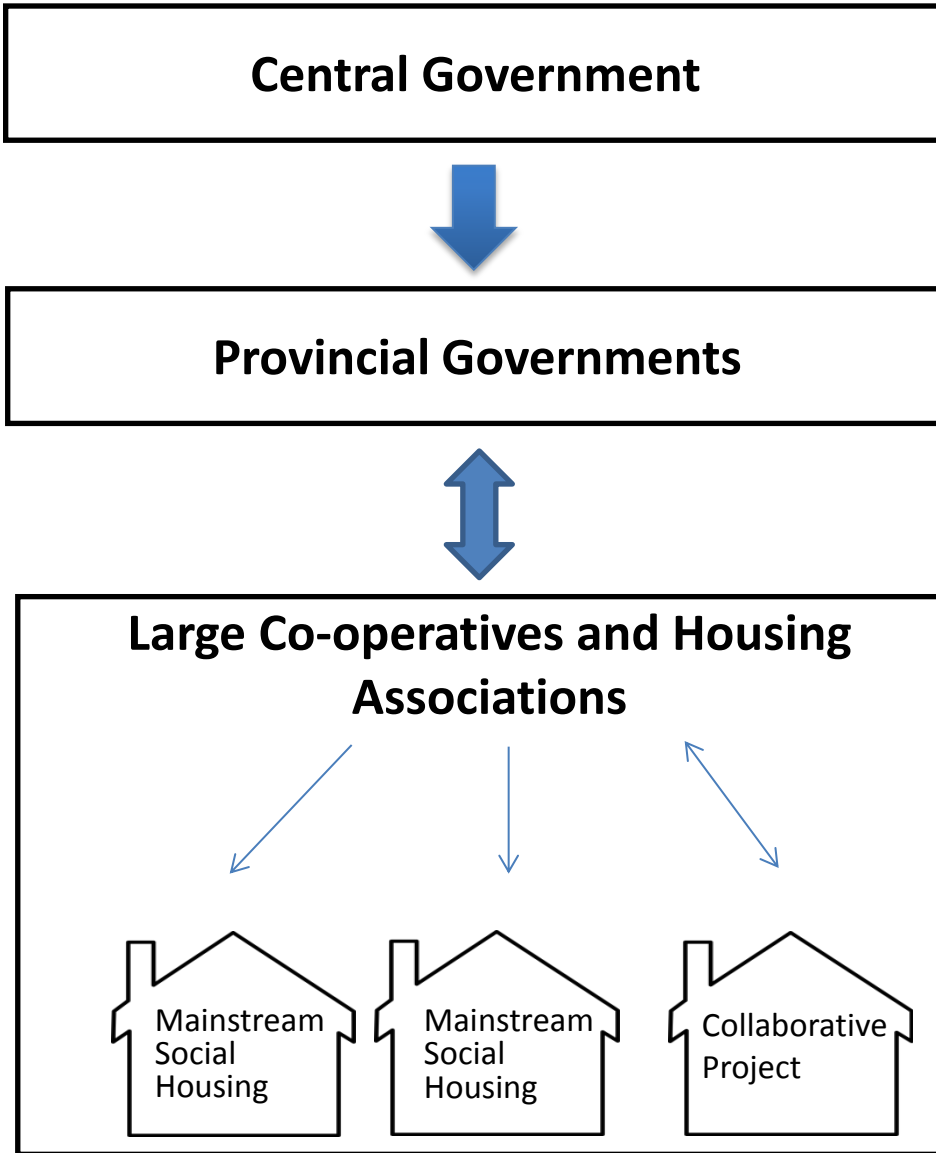
**Dr Richard Lang**

Housing and Communities Research Group

University of Birmingham

[r.lang@bham.ac.uk](mailto:r.lang@bham.ac.uk)

# Social housing system in Austria



# Developer competitions for social housing



**Sonnwendviertel neighbourhood at Hauptbahnhof in Vienna**

# **Social sustainability in developer competitions**

- Local authority supports non-profit developers with direct subsidies and access to cheap land.
- Competitive bidding on specific development sites
- Scoring according to architectural quality, economic aspects, ecological quality and social sustainability
- Developers need to consider criteria of community building, social mixing and tenant participation.
- This model can be applied anywhere, regardless of financial scope of a local authority.

# Case project “So.Vie.So” in Sonnwendviertel



# Community building in large-scale participatory projects

- Residents work together before moving in.
- They plan use of communal spaces and form tenants' advisory board.
- External consultants help to form active groups that take over responsibility for their new homes.
- Key benefits:
  - Better design and use of communal facilities
  - Sense of community and knowing your neighbours from the start
  - Flexibility how much you want to get involved

# Community building in the “So.Vie.So” scheme





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## Further information:

Dr Richard Lang  
Housing and Communities Research Group  
University of Birmingham  
[r.lang@bham.ac.uk](mailto:r.lang@bham.ac.uk)





# Tenant Involvement in Governance – Where next for Northern Ireland?

## Three Half day workshops

The Dutch ‘Polder’ Model : Local Area  
Performance Agreements 2015 Housing Act  
Daniel Bosch, Amsterdam Tenants Organisation

# Polder Model : Origins and Background

Polder = 'talks to overcome differences

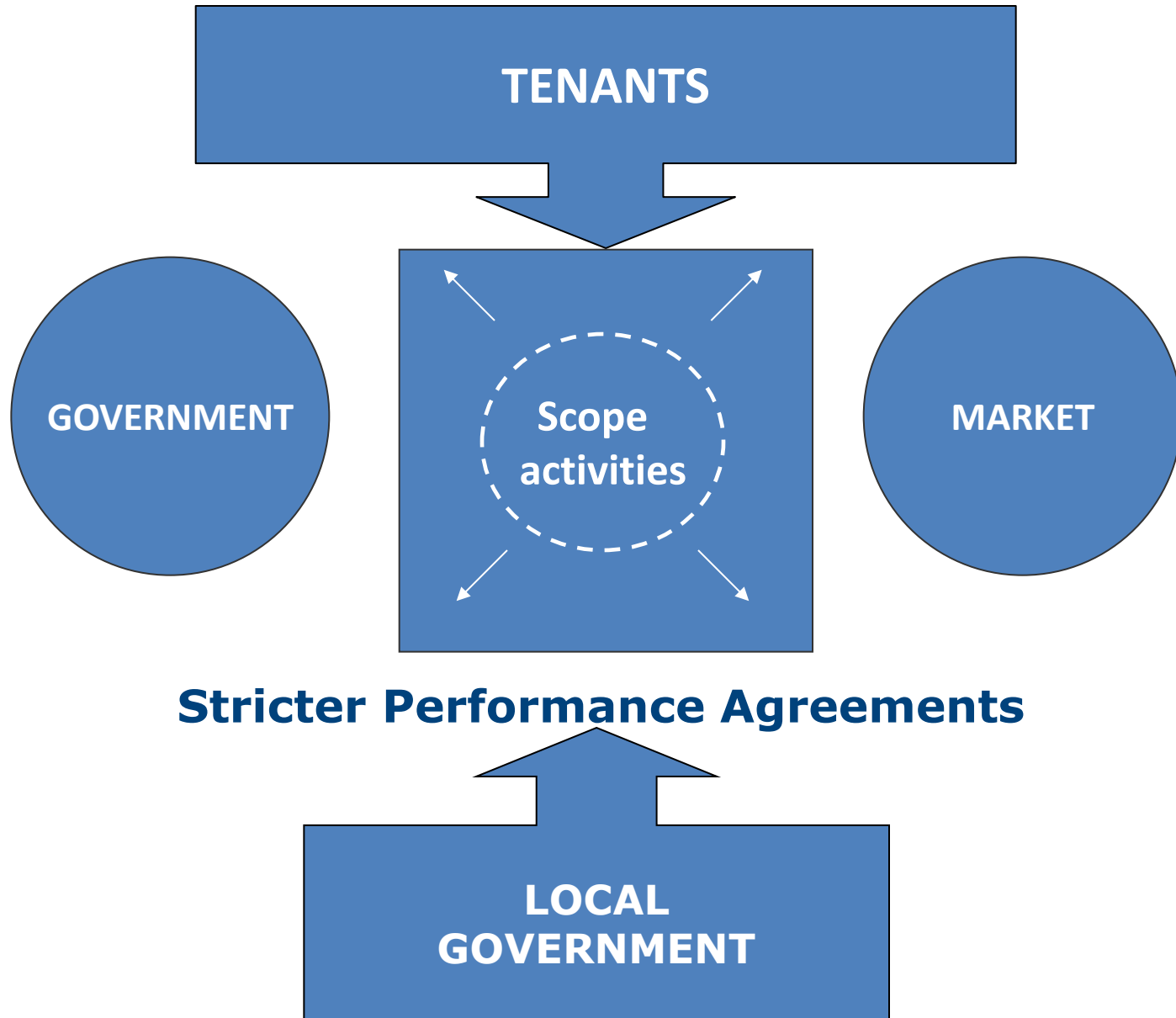
- 70s, 80s urban squatters & students negotiate with city
- 90s tenants with housing associations
- 1996-2010 HAs become less accountable
- 2012-15 Government reacts
- 2015 Housing Act
  - - Re-empower local authorities (LAs) in housing
  - Involve tenants in local strategy & performance



Squatting in the Netherlands became big in the 80s, when a serious lack of housing caused young people to move into abandoned buildings. Squatting in Holland soon turned into a political 'movement'.

<http://www.whatsupwithamsterdam.com/amsterdam-squats/>

# CHANGES TO HA GOVERNANCE



# New Housing Act – Changes HA Accountability & Role

## More power to municipalities and to tenants

- Strict separation 'Service of General Economic Interest'
- Ceiling social housing rent: 710 euro/month

## More focus on housing investments

and less on community investment

- Difficulties for housing associations to invest in:
  - small rural areas (market not interested)
  - urban renovation
  - Liberalization of rents: monitoring affordability and accessibility



Tenants and Local Authorities  
define scope of HA activities

# Principles of the Model

## 2015 Consultation Act

## 2015 Housing Act

1. LA drafts local housing policy
2. HAs submit local offers on how they will contribute following consultation with their tenants organisations
3. Performance Agreements negotiated between LA, Has and tenants
4. The three parties evaluate implementation
5. Where parties do not agree disputes are resolved by Ministerial Advisory Committee



# Enablers and Barriers

- Legal Backing in contrast to earlier polders
- Clear Policy from LA
- Specific Responses from HAs
- Tenants must have the capacity & resources to participate effectively
- Budget – HAs expected to absorb into their costs when budgets are decreasing
- Knowledge is important on finance and politics

‘Tenants must  
Come Together  
Stay Together  
Work Together ‘

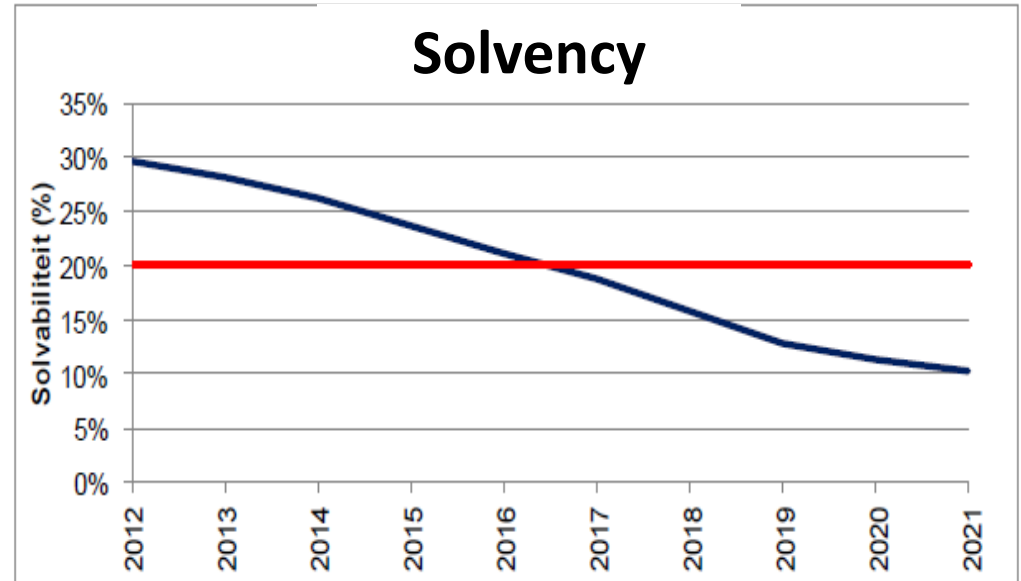
Across landlords in the city

# How it works in practice

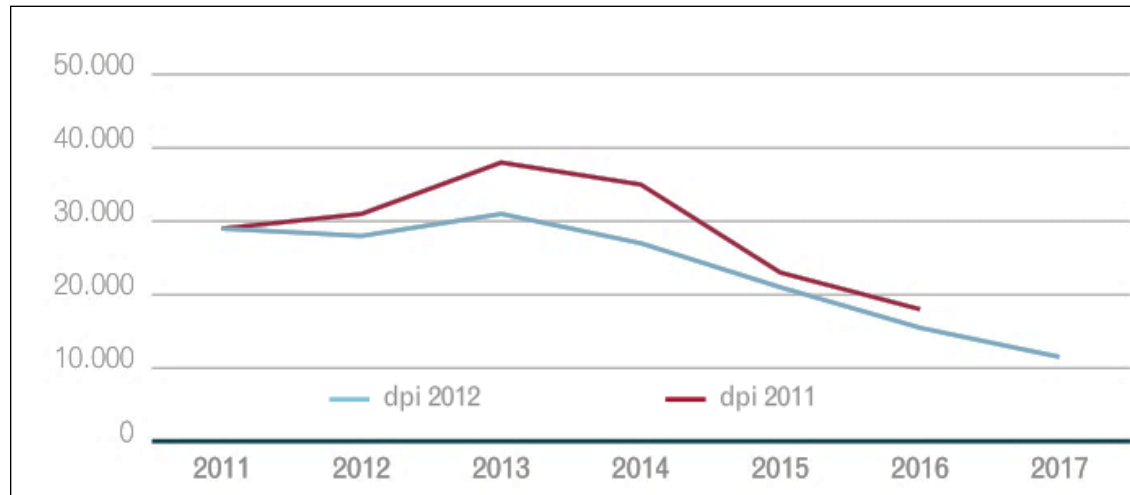
- Only in operation for one year
- Actors have been building on earlier experiences of less formal polder systems
- For tenants organisations
- ***'You need a leader who can build bridges between people (internal) and the other parties (external)'***
- ***'you need a clear vision of what the goals are and how to achieve them'***



# More Influence for tenants but Cloudy forecast for HAs



## New social housing prospects 2012-2017:



Source: WSW trendanalysis 2013-2017



# Advantages for Tenants

- Consultation Act 2015, housing Act 2016, latest stages in a long history
- Amsterdam tenants had already negotiated higher level participation rights but Act extends this to all parts of Netherlands
- Legislation is only one part of struggle to improve position of tenants and tenants organisations
- **‘Five fingers makes a fist that can punch and hit hard’**
- **Warning, you will become a part of the system as the acts formalised your position!**



# Tenant Involvement in Governance – Where next for Northern Ireland?

Three Half day workshops

**The Welsh Model** : New start up  
cooperatives in Wales

Nic Bliss, Confederation of  
Cooperative Housing

# Co-operative Housing

- local tenant control of homes & communities
- different approaches
- rental to ownership
- [www.cch.coop/1001co-ophomes](http://www.cch.coop/1001co-ophomes)

**CCH**  
The Confederation of  
Co-operative  
Housing

**1,001 co-operative  
and community-led  
homes: the housing  
revolution starts here**



**coop** People  
together  
are stronger



**Wales Co-operative Centre**  
**Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru**

**CCH**

# Wales Co-operative Housing programme

- 2012 Welsh Government commitment to co-operative housing
- learning from sector success in England
- 25 schemes in development;
- 4 completed; 3 nearing completion
- ongoing Welsh Government Ministerial and officer support; a new strategy



Wales Co-operative Centre  
Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru



# Top down meets bottom up!

- no existing co-operative housing sector
- developing new schemes working with local authorities & housing associations
- deciding new schemes would be co-ops
- recruiting founder members from waiting lists and transferring tenants
- working with group during house build



Wales Co-operative Centre  
Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru



# Welsh schemes



Wales Co-operative Centre  
Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru



# Pluses and minuses

- cost of building the homes is the same
- time to build homes is the same
- a need for resources to build the co-op
- WCC and CCH support
- housing association cultural change



Wales Co-operative Centre  
Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru



# Pluses and minuses for tenants

- voluntary responsibilities
- everyone knows each other
- strong supportive communities
- control over decision-making
- high quality services
- rents; repairs; anti-social behaviour
- benefits for individuals



Wales Co-operative Centre  
Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru





[www.cch.coop/newcoophomes](http://www.cch.coop/newcoophomes)

**CCH**

Nic Bliss – CCH

07947 019287

nic@cch.coop



**Wales Co-operative Centre**  
**Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru**

**CCH**



# Tenant Involvement in Governance – Where next for Northern Ireland?

## Three Half day workshops

The English Model: Community Gateway

Paul Kelly, Veronica McLintock, David Yates and  
Angela Ayres, Community Gateway Association



# COMMUNITY GATEWAY ASSOCIATION - CGA

**ANGELA AYRES –**

**CGA BOARD MEMBER**

**DAVID YATES**

**CGA BOARD MEMBER**

**VERONICA MCLINTOCK**

**GATEWAY TENANT COMMITTEE CHAIR**

**PAUL KELLY**

**COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT MANAGER**

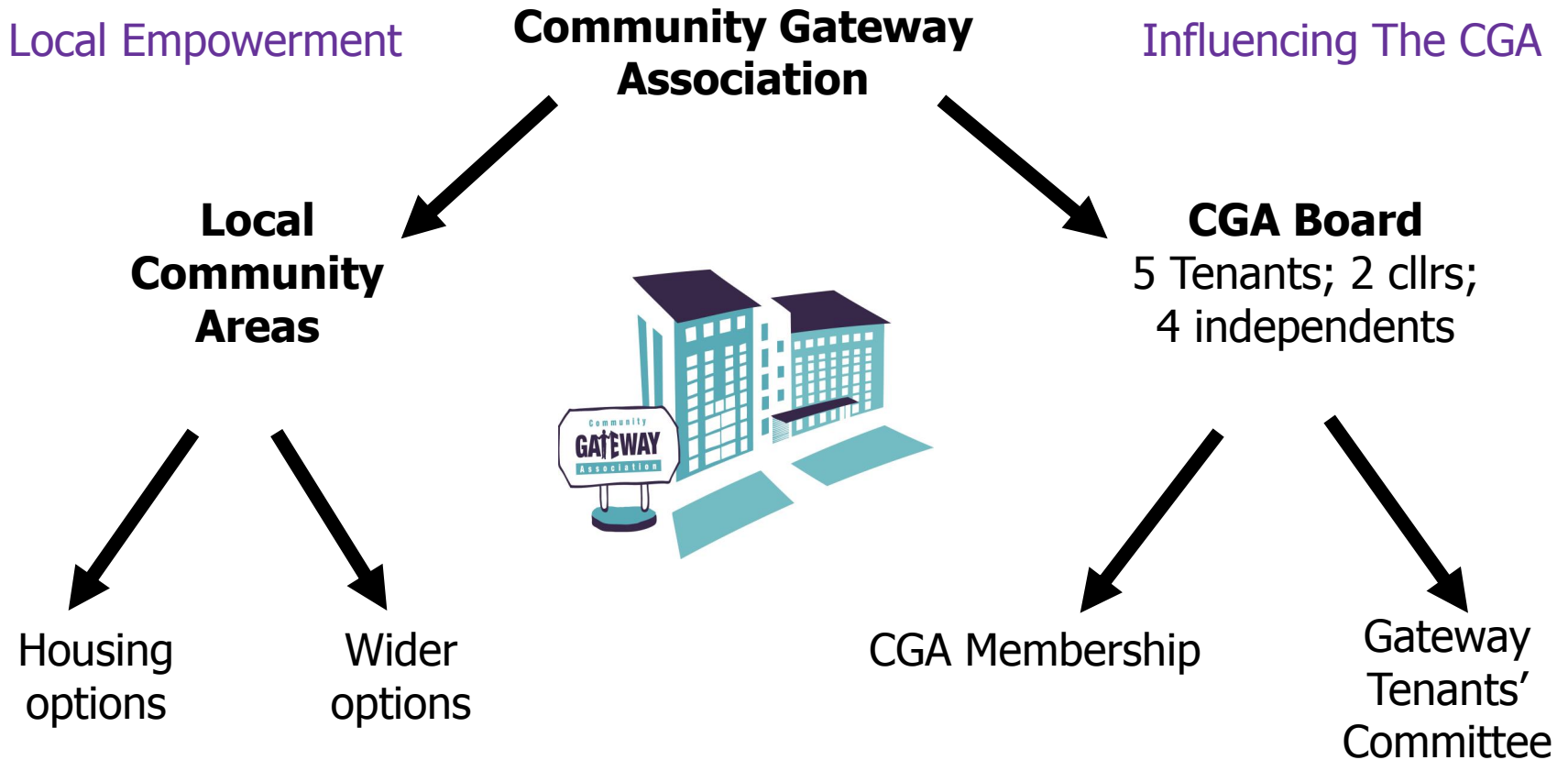
# The Beginning - 2004

- Poor Housing not achieving Decent Homes Standards
- Initial opposition to stock transfer
- Performance issues/ ALMO not an option
- Community Gateway Model Discovered
- Residents & council unity
- Almost no opposition to transfer to community owned organisation



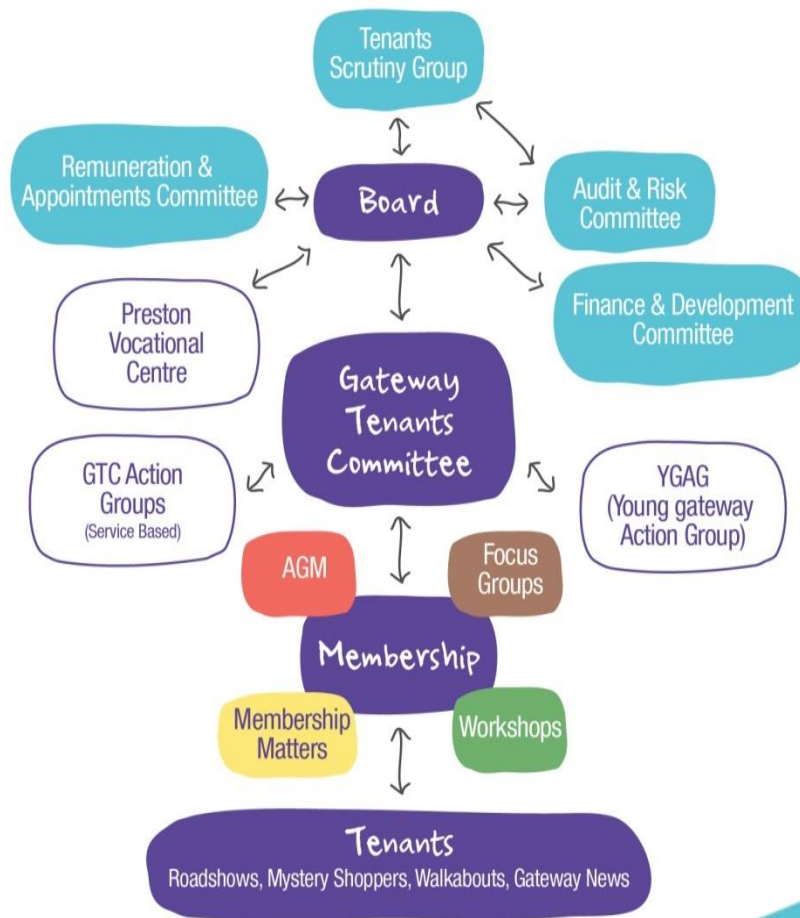


# Community Gateway Model



**CGA Community Empowerment Strategy**

# CGA STRUCTURE



Community Gateway Association



# What We Do....

- CGA Membership / AGM
- Gateway Tenant Committee / Young Gateway Action Group
- Service based Action Groups
- Local Community Areas
- Community Empowerment in the rules
- Business result focused





# Key Strengths

- Tenants drive the strategic direction of CGA & influence decisions affecting local communities;
- Service standards have been agreed with tenants & are widely publicised & being monitored;
- Wider community issues are linked in to the work of the organisation.
- CGA does business better.
- Tenants influence publicity which is easy to understand, interesting and relevant;
- Tenants are encouraged & supported through a variety of training & employment initiatives;



# Tenant Involvement in Governance – Where next for Northern Ireland? Three Half day workshops

Reality Check of 4  
International Examples

# Overview

- Country experts have presented the models
- Supporting Communities relate to Northern Ireland
- Questions from tenants
  - How does it work in practice?
  - How might it work in Northern Ireland?
- Assessment and Voting

# POST ITS WALL

**Who is likely to be interested/support this model in Northern Ireland? YELLOW POST ITS**

**What changes would it take to make it work here? GREEN POST ITS**

**What might make this model attractive to tenants? PINK POST ITS**

# Voting Time

- **Does this model fill a gap in Northern Ireland? VOTE**
- **Could this work here? VOTE**
- **Would tenants want to take part? VOTE**

**PLEASE WRITE YOUR COMMENTS ON THE POST IT NOTES AND WE'LL HAVE A SHOW OF HANDS ON THE VOTES**