



Cambridge
Federation 
of Tenants, Leaseholders & Residents

Annual Report

2008

CAMBRIDGE FEDERATION ANNUAL REPORT 2008

The Cambridge Federation is a small independent, not-for-profit organisation that helps people living in Council housing areas to make a difference in their homes, streets and communities. We have a small team of professional staff and a Committee made up of volunteer tenants, leaseholders and residents who take part in the work carried out by the Federation. We are funded by Cambridge City Council as part of its commitment to involving and working with residents in Council housing.

Our main aims are:

- ❖ Helping residents to influence the way the Council looks after their homes and estates.
- ❖ Giving residents a collective voice on issues that affect their lives.
- ❖ Helping local Residents' Associations, groups and representatives to improve the quality of life in their areas.
- ❖ Providing training and support for residents.
- ❖ Helping to build productive working partnerships between residents, Council officers and City Councillors.

In addition to these aims we have been working closely with the City Council in order to “put residents at the heart of housing” and we will continue this process by being an integral part of the working group developing a resident-led self-regulation board for Cambridge. This board will be made up of local residents who will review Council services, agree performance targets and monitor performance, be involved in developing corporate plans and budgets, and if they become concerned about falling performance, it may seek that further action be taken to rectify the situation.

The Federation Committee

Following the elections at the 2007 AGM the Committee was:

Lewis Wilbur (Chair)
Anna Vine-Lott (Company Secretary)
Colin Dickins (Treasurer)
Terry Sweeney
Margaret Betson
Leila Dockerill
Gwen Wesley (resigned May 08)

The committee decided to co-opt Trevor Ealey to the Committee.

Colin Dickins and Leila Dockerill's terms of office end at this AGM, giving us four places to be filled. Colin has decided to stand for re-election, but Leila has decided to stand down and the Committee would like to thank her for all her hard work and commitment over the years.

The Federation Staff

Luisa Sartini Baldwin (Manager)
Bintou Niangane (Resident Involvement Development Officer)
Simon Windmill (Administrator – left due to redundancy August 08)
James Bull (Communications Officer – left in March 08 to pursue a full-time RI career with the City Council)
Cornelia Ede (Volunteer office assistant – joined in October 08 to assist 2 mornings per week)

An overview of the past year

The past year has had more than its fair share of challenges, but we have successfully overcome them and achieved some excellent outcomes.

Luisa was away on maternity leave until February and Bintou did an excellent job as acting manager, despite being new to the role and to resident involvement.

James Bull decided to leave the Federation to pursue his career with the City Council full-time, rather than splitting his time between them and the Federation. James still works in the Resident Involvement Team and has a close working relationship with all of us at the Federation.

One of the main challenges to be overcome in the past year was a cut in our grant funding. This meant a complete re-evaluation of our service – what should our priorities be, what should our service level agreement with the City Council contain, what roles would we need within the organisation to deliver this etc. As a result of this review the Committee decided that we needed to make the position of Administrator redundant and split the responsibilities between a Manager and an RI Development Officer. Simon Windmill decided that those two roles did not suit him and applied for voluntary redundancy. Losing a member of staff has put the remaining staff under pressure and we have been lucky to gain some voluntary help from Cornelia Ede, who is working closely with Bintou on developing our databases and making them more efficient. We will be trying to gain an increase in our grant for this year so that we could introduce a part-time role to assist with databases, market research and marketing, but given the current economic climate this cannot be guaranteed; if we are not successful then we will try to recruit more voluntary members of staff.

In October the Housing Service was inspected by the Audit Commission and for the first time inspectors asked to visit the Federation office. Whilst here they questioned us closely on our services and our outcomes and seemed very happy with what we are doing. The full report will be published in December.

Highlights & Achievements of 2008

The Federation Committee have been very active on residents' behalf this year, attending many conferences and courses such as:

- ❖ CIH & TPAS Conference in London (discussing proposals for the National Tenants' Voice)
- ❖ Defend Council Housing conferences
- ❖ ARCH Tenants Conference
- ❖ TPAS courses
- ❖ National Tenants Voice Conference in Peterborough
- ❖ InStep Regional Conference in Cambridge
- ❖ HQN briefing on Housing Finance Trials
- ❖ CIH focus groups and seminar on Resident Led Self Regulation
- ❖ Decent Homes & Voids presentations
- ❖ Cambridge Resident Involvement Festival
- ❖ InStep training courses
- ❖ Diversity & Equality training

Street Forums



We have continued to develop our Street Forums from last year. In 2007 we held 10 of these events across the City and involved 384 households; in 2008 we held a further 10 events involving 359 households. During the Street Forums we knock on doors and ask residents their views on Council services and on local issues; the information we gather is collated into an overall report for that area and sent to the Council. Council officers use these reports to take action on immediate issues, plan service improvements and apply for funding for area improvements; they also use local newsletters to report back to residents on these issues and outcomes.

Key successes that have come from this data since we started the Street Forums are:

- ❖ A review of caretaking services across the City
- ❖ £137,000 funding for improvements to the Ekin Road area of the City
- ❖ £45,000 funding for improvements in Wilson Close
- ❖ £44,500 funding for Hawkins Road
- ❖ £16,000 funding for Maitland Avenue

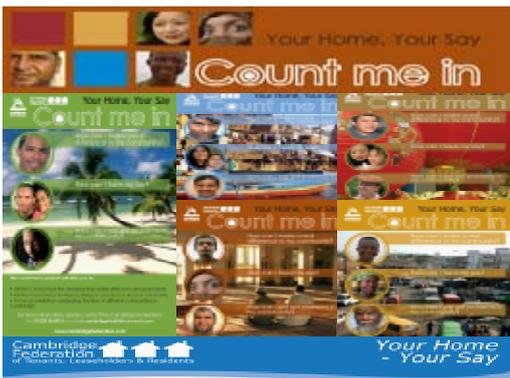
Tenants' Initiative Scheme



In 2007-8 £29,242 of projects were approved, benefiting over 1000 households; these included secure bike storage, security lighting, water butts, planting and hard landscaping in communal gardens.

This years' budget has been cut to £21,000, most of which has already been allocated to projects, but we will still be working with local residents on schemes that can be pre-approved ready to start work in April 2009.

Count Me In



This project is aimed at residents from minority ethnic backgrounds and aims to ensure that the voices of these residents are heard and taken into account by the City Council. We have developed a presentation that will be taken to minority ethnic groups around the City, telling them about what we do and the benefits of "getting involved". Our ultimate aim is to provide a network for these groups to support each other and help to pass their views onto the Council, and to encourage representatives from these groups to join our committee and our tenant reps to help others across the City.

Housing Sounding Board

This is a way of finding out residents' opinions on Council services or decisions. Whenever we contact residents during a Street Forum or when they complete an Open Door survey we ask if they would be willing to be consulted again, and if so how they would prefer to be contacted – e-mail, post or phone. Those who agree are entered onto our database. We help Council officers draw up short surveys on specific topics and then choose a number of residents from the database and ask them to complete the survey. We put all the responses together and feed this information back to the Council who use it to influence their policies and improve service delivery.

We undertook the first of these surveys in August, asking questions about how satisfied residents were with their experience of contacting the Housing Service; this survey was sent to 500 residents, achieved a 10% response rate and the Housing Service were very pleased with the feedback they received.

We are currently working with the Independent Living Service on designing a survey about Sheltered Housing.

SSRA



Every month we hold a meeting for Sheltered Scheme residents. These meetings move around the City schemes that have communal meeting rooms, transport is provided, as are tea, coffee and biscuits. Every month we send out minutes and invitations to 667 residents and on average we have an attendance of 19 at each meeting. At every meeting we have a guest speaker; this year these have included the Martin Johnston - dog warden, Alastair Roberts - Safer Communities, COPE, Maureen Tsentides - ASB Team, Cambridge Carbon Footprint, Deborah Barker – Older People's consultation, Pam Nicholas - Age Concern and Sam Griggs – Home Energy Officer.

One of the issues we have been pursuing over the past two years is heating; ensuring our residents have affordable warmth. Cambridge City Council now agree that despite storage heaters being a “decent” form of heating as far as central government is concerned, it is not suitable for sheltered schemes as it is not easy to control and can prove very expensive to run. As a result they will now be going to committee to seek funding to change these systems over to gas central heating.

Tenant Forum

This is a quarterly meeting which alternates between the north and south of the City, giving residents the chance to meet and share experiences and to be consulted by Council officers; this year the consultations have included tenancy management, strategic development, value for money and community safety.

One of the strategies that the Forum were consulted on was the “under occupation incentive scheme”, and as a result of their input the removal allowance was increased from £500 to £800, to cover removal expenses in this area.



Action Groups



We are currently working with residents in St Bede's Crescent who are unhappy with anti-social behaviour and poor maintenance in their area. These issues were highlighted through a Street Forum and we have put together a multi-agency group, including officers from Streetscene, Housing, ASB Team and the Police, to work with residents on resolving these issues.

We are also working with residents in the St Matthew's estate who have significant problems with anti-social behaviour in their area.

School Garden Project



This year we began a pilot scheme in association with Jon Woolley from Streetscene, to help children create a garden at Orchard Park Community School. When we arrived it was bare ground, the children were asked to debate and decide what they would like to grow and then Jon helped them to prepare their plots

Over the months they tended their plants, becoming more and more enthusiastic as they saw their flowers, fruit and vegetables grow.



The Headteacher has reported increased interest and enthusiasm for their environment, which resulted in the children designing a wildlife pond to add to their garden.

The children have learnt a great deal from this process about decision-making, working together, being part of their community, lifecycles etc. and we are keen to continue to develop this project with them.

We are also looking to extend the project to two further City schools in 2009, eventually linking them up to form a network that can help us to influence young people and gain an insight into their priorities and concerns.

Annual Gardening Competition

This is our competition for Council tenants/leaseholders to showcase their gardens, balconies & containers. Entries for this reduced from 25 to 14 this year, but standards were still very high and included an amazing garden by a child aged 10. The children's gardens at Orchard Park Primary School were also included in this competition and the children were awarded packets of seeds.



In 2009 we will be working with residents and Council officers to try to widen the appeal of this competition. We would like to include communal areas that are looked after by residents, as this may encourage local groups to work together to create new gardens and create a greater pride in the local environment.

Message from the Cambridge Federation Chair – Lewis Wilbur

As you will see from this report we have had a very busy and challenging year; but we have achieved some really excellent outcomes for the residents we work for. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Federation staff and volunteers for their hard work and to thank all those tenants, leaseholders and residents who have supported the work of the Federation throughout the year.

I am very encouraged that we have received nominations to the committee from two new residents, and I hope that more residents can be encouraged to support the Federation and help us decide the priorities for the coming year, so that we can deliver further improvements for Cambridge residents.

In 2009 we will continue with the projects we already have in place, to build upon our successes and bring resident involvement to more people around the City.

Treasurer's report – Colin Dickins

Despite the cut in our funding and the resulting redundancy, the Federations budget is being well managed. I have made regular visits to the office to carry out the financial checks that the Treasurer must make. The accounts for 2007-8 were passed to our accountants Wilkins Kennedy for their scrutiny, and a summary of their report is included with this document. Anyone wishing to see the full report can make an appointment to do this at our office in the Bath House.

Due to the rising cost of rents Wilkins Kennedy have decided to close their Cambridge office, and they have proposed that our future accounting needs be met by their colleagues at Andrew Webster Limited, 10 Wellington Street, Cambridge. Having met with two of their representatives I recommended that the Committee accept this proposal at our meeting on 26th September 2008.

The Cambridge Federation of Tenants, Leaseholders & Residents
(A company limited by guarantee)

Profit and Loss Account for the Year ended 31 March 2008

	2008	2007
	£	£
1 Turnover		
Grant received - City Council	90,735	88,990
Photocopying & other	696	632
Tenant Initiative Scheme	<u>1,750</u>	<u>3,500</u>
	<u>93,181</u>	<u>93,122</u>
 2 Establishment Costs		
Rent	3,908	8,596
Insurance	1,671	1,617
Room Hire	<u>451</u>	<u>800</u>
	<u>6,030</u>	<u>11,013</u>
 3 Administrative Expenses		
Wages	59,378	54,519
Social Security	5,828	4,882
Pensions	3,186	3,162
Hire of equipment	4,239	4,159
Telephone	996	1,106
Post & stationery	3,119	2,664
Travelling	3,303	2,877
Repairs & renewals	55	124
AGM expenses		20
Web site & internet costs	692	645
Computer expenses	779	640
Sundry expenses	136	
Accountancy	1,800	1,800
Payroll costs	221	176
Legal fees		1,410
Subscriptions	35	140
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	1,336	1,419
Profit/loss on sale of intangible fixed assets		<u>88</u>
	<u>85,103</u>	<u>79,831</u>
 4 Selling & Marketing Costs		
Training	370	1,150
Federation expenses	<u>488</u>	<u>430</u>
	<u>858</u>	<u>1,580</u>
 5 Finance Costs		
Bank charges	<u>122</u>	<u>143</u>
 6 Finance Income		
Deposit account interest	<u>1,269</u>	<u>905</u>