

## **Crossroads to involvement, 2007 HFTRA Conference**

### **Panels responses to questions from the floor:**

**Q: Can you assure residents that you will always do your best for them?**

**AC:** We will always listen to residents and try to do our very best. Hounslow Homes has been in existence for five years and we will now put all our efforts into continuing to make improvements over the next five. We remain dedicated to our residents and hope the government push housing issues up the agenda.

**BO'S:** I want to be the chief executive of the best Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) in the country and provide the best possible services to our residents. We are a three-star organisation, although that award was a little while ago. We must ensure that we maintain the things we are doing well and improve upon the areas where we can do better. There have been changes in our senior management team recently and it will naturally take a little time for things to bed down. We guarantee that we will be honest and up front with our residents and continue to include them as a vital part of our decision-making processes.

**Counllr Andrews:** I am proud of the close working relationship between London Borough of Hounslow and Hounslow Homes. One of the main reasons I wanted this post (as lead member for housing and community safety) was to help continue to build the ALMO and ensure that strong teamwork improves services for Hounslow's residents.

### **How do you propose to get younger residents more involved?**

**Counllr Andrews:** I want all residents to be involved, but yes, there is a particular need to engage more young people. We are very interested to hear your views on how to increase resident involvement in this way. The essence of what I want to do as lead member is to hear what you feel isn't working and work with you and Hounslow Homes to put it right.

**BO'S:** I think we can reach out to younger residents by utilising technology, such as the Internet, email and mobile phones. It's an

area we need to explore. We are also producing a DVD about Hounslow Homes, which I hope will connect with all sections of the community. We offer community football and other pursuits for young people but we need to increase the amount of activities we offer. We must be imaginative and encourage young people to be involved in all sorts of ways.

**AC:** Young people are the future and must be given our time and attention. I'd like to propose coach trips for our residents to explore the borough. This would allow a glimpse of what's going on elsewhere and allow Hounslow residents, of all ages, to see what's happening across the borough. The more time we spend with the young the more youthful we all feel!

**Q: Graffiti can often be a problem on our estates. Shouldn't you get parents to pay to have it removed?**

**BO'S:** Whilst I feel that both parents and the perpetrators of the graffiti should be held accountable, I also believe that prevention is better than cure. The Respect agenda needs to be developed and challenge why problems such as graffiti arise. Like all parents I don't know what my children are doing for every minute of the day, when they are out with friends etc. We need to work closely with other agencies and find out how we can prevent such anti-social behaviour and also give young people plenty to do.

**Counllr Andrews:** As lead member for community safety I often attend sessions where agencies like Hounslow Homes address these types of issues. Restoration justice can be very effective, like getting those responsible to clean their estates. I'm a supporter of communities getting involved in positively reacting to unwelcome behaviour on their estates. Even though I know this approach has been successful in Isleworth, it's easier said than done. The young often feel disengaged so we must find ways of encouraging them to respect their environment. If perpetrators are caught they should be punished.

**AC:** I agree that separate agencies need to work together to address the causes of the problems. Hounslow Homes has a limited pot of money to spend on estate improvements; It's your money and we want to hear from you how you would like it spent.

**Q: I am a tenant on the Haverfield estate. A senior police officer has told us today how drug crime has nearly been driven off the estate through partnership networking. It shows what can be done when organisations work together.**

**Counllr Andrews:** That's great to hear and I certainly believe that a multi-agency approach works. You cannot solve problems by different agencies doing different things. Positive impact is increased through the sharing and implementation of ideas.

**AC:** Partnerships are like a team pulling together in a tug of war - working in unison for maximum effect. As well as partners like the police, Hounslow Homes and London Borough of Hounslow, residents are hugely influential in all partnerships. The input of residents' groups is essential in making the right decisions.

**BO'S:** Haverfield provides a great example of how partnerships can work. Keeping vigilant and ensuring that standards do not slip is equally important. Once a result has been achieved the partnership agencies must not disappear but should maintain an interest. I have been very much taken by the area forums but want to encourage more neighbourhood forums on a more local level.

**Q: Do the panel believe in maintaining a high visibility for neighbourhood wardens and community police officers to prevent crime?**

**BO'S:** Naturally residents want highly visible patrols on estates but it's a matter of trying to spread our resources. There is not an easy answer but Hounslow Homes have recently sent residents a questionnaire to hear your ideas. The police also have an important role to play and are a vital ingredient in these discussions.

**Cnllr Andrews:** We listen to residents and understand the importance of deterring crime. There are various possibilities regarding the presence of concierges, neighbourhood wardens and community police officers that are being explored. We want to get it right.

**AC:** There is also the need to design out crime through Hounslow Homes' 'decent estates' programme; this includes things like removing alleyways and introducing better lighting. Residents

should also input into improving estate safety by joining their *community safety ward panel*.

**Q: Are there any plans to introduce more community halls to give kids something to do?**

**BO'S:** We certainly have some community halls on our bigger estates and have recently refurbished a couple. It is a big task to develop and sustain them and we have to decide along with tenants' associations whether we have the resources to do so. We would probably not be able to sustain community halls on all our estates but need to look at our strategy.

**AC:** There are various options regarding community centres that could perhaps be explored. I know in Bolton the local council converted a house into a youth centre but that's not always possible.

**Cnllr Andrews:** I'm a big fan of community centres but it really is a question of available resources. Alf's suggestion is a good idea but obviously very difficult with the current shortage of social housing.