**Points to Ponder – Seen It All Before ?**

Death by a Thousand Cuts

 - When the council has decided to make changes to local structures, if those changes are substantial, they are often required to enter into a consultation process, so instead they introduce the changes in small increments below the threshold level for the consultation.

This is precisely what is happening to Council Housing Governance, i.e. there already exists not only the vision of what Council Housing will be, but the council has already mapped out how to get there. This necessitates the introduction of changes by stealth, and the final parts of the plan(s) then presented fait-accompli.

Examples:

- meetings have increasingly diminishing agenda items requiring decisions, and the agenda items themselves are trite and inconsequential, and could in any case have been sent by email without the need for any meeting at all

 - the City-Wide and CEPG and IRPG meetings are not consultations at all, but comprise time-fillers that give the impression of there being consultation

 - The interest, influence and control by tenants, via their representatives, is yet further diluted by the increasing imposition of non-housing, council-created groups, and falsely ascribing to them 'representative' status. These council-created groups are, in effect, proxy council departments. Note what will be happening with ‘Housing Forums’

Examples:

  - on a city-wide basis, there are increasing complaints about the imposition of community forums, through which the council launders funds. As well as forums there is also the undue influence of the council's pets such as SOAR, ZEST, and MDC.

  - the council-controlled groups are given community consultation rights within the new Community Panels. As with the now defunct Assemblies, TARAs were subsumed under the council's nominated groups i.e. the council was only consulting with itself.

It was at first thought that the abuse of TARA volunters was a one-off incident. Since then reports from all over the city show that non-controlled TARAs have had their volunteers subjected to varying abuse. Whilst instances differ, the pattern is always the same, i.e.

 - a period of softening up, perhaps by exclusion, or neighbourhood rumour-mongering

 - grooming individuals to sabotage the targets, in readiness for a 'coup'

 - false allegations and innuendo. upon which basis prejudice and sanction follow

 - eventual attempted take-over of the TARA.

For all the abuses, current senior councillors actively encourage and publicly support the abusers. After all, they are doing their masters' bidding, which in turn is consistent with the council's policy of Control or Destroy.

Another common factor is that, as is nearly always the case, there is an underlying agenda involving money, which must either have community consent, or which, as has happened, must be kept secret from the community affected, because of fraud.

About a year ago there was supposed to be some work to make the management of the Recognition Policy consistent throughout Sheffield. But one reason for this was because the Recognition Policy was being used as a weapon by, quite frankly, abusive managers who were being allowed to behave as virtual dictators.

It was about a year ago that the management of the Recognition Policy was taken in-house, although nowadays we are back to maverick managers, supported by senior councillors. It will be interesting to see what comes out of the current round of 'consultation'. Beware any attempt to involve 'independent' services or arbitration - they are just council control by another name.

Also about a year ago there was work on a Complaints process. It was established at the time that the Complaints process applied solely to delivery of services and did not adequately cater for complaints against personnel. There is still no formal process, although it could be argued, now that Housing is in-house, that the council's Disciplinary Procedure should apply.

This lack of adequate Complaints process was taken advantage of by misbehaving managers, who, supported by senior elected members, have had no formal process to hold them accountable - which, after all, was the intention all the time.

There are also further ongoing activities to destabilise, disenfranchise and disempower tenants. This is by absorbing non-housing functions to be paid for by the HRA whilst at the same time some housing functions ( and their budgets ) are merged with another service department. The usual excuse for this is 'efficiencies', but, as far as can be seen, it is just theft, plain and simple, where the poorest are subsidizing the richest.

Has anyone noticed how tenants are also having less and less say over their respective budgets ?

This council decided long ago that its policy to revamp drying areas was not affordable. Therefore, at least in the SouthWest, the solution was to fabricate evidence to justify robbing another budget. This is fraud, and the cover-up of that fraud is corruption.  
  
Also in the SouthWest, one TARA has prioritised the provision of drop-kerbs so as to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. The Council has not included drop-kerbs in the Amey contract, so expect ( yet again ) the HRA to pay for what should come out of the Council Tax from the Highways budget.  
Therefore, the tenants, via their HRA, and already the most impoverished, will be expected to pay for improvements that will be equally enjoyed by non-tenants.  
   
There are many items that COULD be affordable if NON-housing items were removed from the business plan, i.e. environment, social services, I.T. roll-out, etc, all being financed from the HRA by tenants, yet enjoyed by non-tenants, who get a free ride.

WHERE is it detailed the alleged anticipated income from the sale of the land and the properties consequent upon maturation of the partnerships within the Sheffield Housing Company ?  
   
This council continues to exploit the poorest and most vulnerable as a mere resource to finance their pie-in-the-sky policies. We have seen it all before.