

# Tenant Scrutiny Committee (TSC)

## Report on Written Communications

### 1. Introduction

The TSC were aware that each year Arcon sends out:

- 2 x newsletters
- 1 x annual report
- 2 x rent statement per year.

The TSC felt that it would be useful to assess if tenants value these communication methods and assess whether these communication methods represent value for money.

### 2. Methods used for the scrutiny of written communications

To assess the effectiveness of these communications the TSC carried out a number of activities, these included:

- Reviewing the frequency and cost of producing the annual report, newsletter and rent statements
- Conducting a survey on written communications with all tenants, and analysing the 136 responses to the survey.

### 3. Overview of scrutiny findings

The TSC have considered tenants' views and the costs and benefits of the newsletter, annual report and rent statements. The TSC feel that year on year cost savings can be made by making the newsletter and annual report available electronically rather than automatically sending a hard copy to all tenants. Tenants felt more strongly about retaining a paper copy of their rent statements and therefore the TSC feel these should remain.

The TSC were impressed with how well the text messaging service had worked with regards to obtaining responses to the survey. Following the text message 87 online surveys were completed with a further 49 surveys being obtained by TSC members door knocking. Therefore, the TSC feel Arcon should use this method more frequently to obtain views from tenants on their services.

#### 3.1 Newsletter

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The survey identified that 83% of respondents received the newsletter, with a total of 77% reading it or skimming through it.

When asked how they would feel if Arcon stopped producing paper copies of the newsletter the following responses were received.

Number of comments: 121

Ok / No problem/ Not bothered	Would miss it	Save money	Want to know what is going on	Prefer paper copy	Email / online fine.	Not Sure
52	23	5	8	12	13	8

The TSC noted that only 12 respondents specifically said they preferred a paper and that the majority of respondents were not bothered about receiving a paper copy.

The TSC were informed that £3257.00 a year is spent on sending out two copies of the newsletter, this figure does not include time spent by staff delivering the newsletter. The TSC noted that it was clear that many tenants value the content of the newsletter, however tenants were flexible as to whether they received a hard or electronic copy. Therefore, the TSC felt there are cost savings to be made to the Association by reviewing how the newsletter is sent out to tenants.

### Recommendations

1. Arcon to consider providing an electronic copy of the newsletter to all tenants, rather than a hard copy. We feel this could be achieved by making the newsletter available on the website and notifying tenants by text that it is available. In addition, tenants should be notified that a paper copy is available by request.
2. Consider producing one newsletter a year in the Spring, as tenants receive the Annual Report in September and therefore do not require a winter newsletter.

### 3.2 Annual Report

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The survey identified that 63% of respondents received the annual report, 36% said they did not receive a copy. Anecdotally when the TSC completed face to face surveys some respondents said they did not receive the report, but confirmed that they did have a copy of the Arcon calendar (which is the annual report). Of those that said they had received the report a total of 65% had read or skimmed through it. When asked how they would feel if Arcon stopped producing paper copies of the annual report the following responses were received.

Number of comments: 106

Ok / No problem/ Not bothered	Would miss it	Save money	Want to know what is going on	Prefer paper copy	Email / online fine.	Not Sure
50	7	2	7	22	10	8

The TSC noted that these results were similar to the newsletter, in that the majority of respondents were flexible about how they received the annual report.

The annual report costs £2947 in print and postage costs each year, therefore the TSC felt there are cost savings to be made to the Association by reviewing the format of the annual report and how it is sent out to tenants.

It appears that the annual report is less memorable for tenants than the newsletter, however tenants did use the calendar.

### Recommendations

3. Arcon to consider providing an electronic copy of the annual report to all tenants, rather than a hard copy. We feel this could be achieved by making the annual report available on the website and notifying tenants by text that it is available. In addition, tenants should be notified that a paper copy is available by request.

4. Arcon to consider producing a one-page calendar in December each year, and use it to promote key messages. For example, the importance of keeping mobile numbers up to date so that Arcon can stay in touch using the text messaging service and remind tenants that they can access their rent account 24 hours a day online to check their account and make payments.

### 3.3 Rent statements

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The survey indicated that rent statements are valued by tenants with 88% of respondents saying they received them and read them.

When asked how they would feel if Arcon stopped producing paper copies of the annual report the following responses were received.

Number of comments: 112

Ok / No problem/ Not bothered	Would miss it	Save money	Need it to present to others	Prefer paper copy	Email / online fine.	Not Sure
27	2	1	1	53	20	6

The majority of respondents wished to retain a paper copy and some tenants noted they needed a paper copy as proof of rent to show to other companies and organisations. Some tenants noted that the current format of the rent statement can appear confusing.

### Recommendations

5. Continue to send out a paper copy of the rent statement every 6 months.
6. In consultation with tenants review the format of the rent statement to make it easier to read.
7. Consider how to improve access to electronic statements for those that require them in this way.

### 3.4 Other Findings

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The TSC survey indicated that 116 out of the 136 respondents have access to the internet via smartphones, computers and tablets, with 67% of all respondents accessing the internet using their smartphone. These results show a growing trend amongst Arcon tenants for internet use and that this is more likely to be done via a smartphone.

### **Recommendations**

8. Consider developing an app for smartphones to enable ease of access to Arcon's online services.
9. Promote community resources where people can get online and / or learn how to get online.

### **4. Support for the Scrutiny**

The TSC wishes to express its thanks to all the tenants who took the time to respond to the communications survey and to the members of staff who have assisted with this scrutiny.

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### Appendix 1 – Recommendations

Area	Recommendation	Management response  Agree / Partial / Disagree	Proposed actions	Timescale	Responsibility
Newsletter	<p>1. Arcon to consider providing an electronic copy of the newsletter to all tenants, rather than a hard copy. We feel this could be achieved by making the newsletter available on the website and notifying tenants by text that it is available. In addition, tenants should be notified that a paper copy is available by request.</p>	Agree	<p><b>In future a pdf of the newsletter will be produced and posted onto the website. A deeplake text will be sent out advising that the newsletter is available on line and a paper copy is available on request.</b></p>	November 2016	DL/JOC
	<p>2. Consider producing one newsletter a year in the Spring, as tenants receive the Annual Report in September and therefore do not require a winter newsletter.</p>	Agree	<p><b>Produce only one newsletter per year in the spring.</b></p>	November 2016	DL/JOC



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	payments.				
<b>Rent statements</b>	5. Continue to send out a paper copy of the rent statement every 6 months.	Agree	Continue current practice.	September 2016	<b>JK</b>
	6. In consultation with tenants review the format of the rent statement to make it easier to read.	Agree	Arcon will be changing our It system in the next 6 months, the format of rent statements can be reviewed with the TSC as part of this process.	March 2017	<b>JOC/ IT manager</b>
	7. Consider how to improve access to electronic statements for those that require them in this way.	Agree	Arcon will be changing our IT system and up dating our website in the next 6 months, better access to rent statements can be reviewed as part of this process. They are currently available via My Tenancy which we will promote.	March 2017	<b>JOC/ IT manager</b>
<b>Other Findings</b>	8. Consider developing an app for smartphones to enable ease of access to Arcon’s online services.	<b>Agree</b>	Arcon will be changing our It system in the next 6 months, developing a smartphone APP will be considered as part of this process, and which will link in to the corporate plan objective to get up to 80% of tenants self serving.	March 2017	<b>JOC/IT manager</b>
	9. Promote community resources where people can get online and / or	<b>Agree</b>	We can identify local community resources where tenants can get on line and publicise these in future	January 2107	<b>JOC</b>

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	learn how to get online.		newsletters, on our website and in the new tenant sign up pack.		
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