

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: The Economy, Housing, and the Arts Policy and Accountability Committee

Date: 9 November 2021

Subject: Resident Involvement Update

Report of: Daniel Miller, Head of Community Engagement /Resident Involvement & Service Improvement Manager

Responsible Director: Jonathan Pickstone, Strategic Director for the Economy

Summary

This report serves to update the Committee on the range of environmental improvement projects that the council's Resident Involvement Team in the Economy Department has undertaken with the resident-led Investment Group and showcases projects that deliver direct benefits to our communities.

This report also provides an update on the wider involvement structure in housing and how H&F as a whole is coming together to develop a community engagement strategy to support the communities we serve.

Recommendations

That the Committee both note and comment on the report.

Wards Affected: All

H&F Priorities

Please state how the subject of the report relates to our priorities – delete those priorities which are not appropriate.

H&F Priorities	How this report aligns to the H&F Priorities
Building shared prosperity	All our improvement projects are based on the concept of co-production and joint development, providing numerous opportunities for residents to get involved and build new skills. We work with contractors who provide apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities. All our projects see beneficial local environmental regeneration on parts of our estates, adding to our shared prosperity.

Doing things with residents, not to them	The environmental improvement projects are resident-led, where co-production ensuring a strong voice in conception and development from start to finish. This includes everything from the initial bid or proposal, through to site visits, making decisions with contractors and the installation of elements.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	The allocation of funding for projects is awarded through a rigorous approach of resident scrutiny to ensure the most cost-effective and sustainable projects are being delivered. We aim for our projects to have self-sustaining and long-term elements to ensure a maximum return potential.
Taking pride in H&F	The pandemic has highlighted the need for high quality public spaces and these have become of increased value to our communities. These environmental initiatives are centred around the community spaces on our estates, and the continued safety, health and well-being of our residents to live in more sustainable and greener spaces.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Resident Involvement Team works collaboratively with residents to deliver environmental improvements on council housing estates across the borough. Improvements range from playgrounds, community growing gardens, multi-use games areas, secure bike storage, waste and recycling enclosures, planting and biodiversity projects, and surface urban drainage (SuDS) projects.
- 1.2. All improvements relate to communal housing land on our estates, at sheltered housing schemes and purpose-built blocks.
- 1.3. In the last two years, over £500,000 has been invested in environmental improvement projects. We're particularly proud that we've been able to continue to work with and invest in our communities during the challenges that the pandemic has presented.
- 1.4. Bids are resident-led with a focus on improving:
 - Biodiversity
 - Sustainability
 - Community safety and community development
 - What component of a bid can be funded?
 - Estate/block historic investment
 - Project life expectancy.

- 1.5. We place a strong focus on projects being sustainable and cost-effective and we strive to deliver the maximum capital benefits in the final project.
- 1.6. We work with and consult with the community as the project evolves and ensure that the improvements meet the aspirations of residents. During the pandemic this has involved letters to all households, consultations (online and postal), online meetings and site visits.
- 1.7. There are two main funding streams for our environmental improvement projects – the Neighbourhood Improvement Projects (NIP) and the Place Environmental Rejuvenation Programme (PERP). Further information on both funds is set out below.

2. Overview & Outcomes

2.1. Neighbourhood Improvement Projects (NIP)

- Neighbourhood improvement projects are for works to community spaces on council housing land to improve the environment of the estate, block, or sheltered housing scheme for all residents.
- Residents can bid for a wide range of improvement works where the expenditure results in buying, building or improving fixed assets up to the value of £25,000 per bid.
- The fund cannot be used for maintenance, replacement or repairs, for improvement to individual properties, or for wages or running costs.
- All council housing residents can apply either through their Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) or by a smaller group of residents acting on behalf of their block, street, or sheltered housing scheme.
- Where there is no active representation, the relevant housing officer can submit a bid. In all cases, evidence of consultation and support for the proposal needs to be provided.
- Funding applications can be made throughout the year.

2.2. Completed NIP projects include:

- Aspen Gardens – new seating in communal garden
- Clem Attlee – secure bike storage
- Bayonne estate – new playgrounds
- Field Road (Muscal House) - secure bike storage and planters
- Flora Gardens – planting, seating and railings
- Lugard House - secure bike storage
- Lytton Estate - new playground
- St Peters Terrace – planters and seating.

2.3. NIP projects that are underway include:

- Ashchurch Court – community growing garden, seating, railings and planters
- Clem Attlee – bulk storage unit improvements, including the installation of a green wall
- Linacre Court- new waste and recycling facilities along with a new bulk storage enclosure
- Marryat Court- new waste facilities and improvements to communal garden by installing seating/children's play equipment
- Michael Stewart House- greening the grey and improving the communal garden area with planters, new picnic tables and benches to match existing ones
- Millshott Close - resurfacing the turtle tops in the communal garden with hard-wearing mulch
- Queen Caroline estate - installation of 2 secure bike hangars
- St Andrews Court - planters in the communal room and communal garden and a green screen across the perimeter of the garden to increase privacy for residents.

2.4. **Place Environmental Rejuvenation Programme (PERP)**

- The place environmental rejuvenation programme supports tenants' and residents' associations and other resident groups to transform public spaces on estates, so they are greener, safer and benefit the local community.
- Residents can apply to improve the external communal areas of the estate, block, or sheltered housing unit.
- Each proposed bid can be for a maximum of £75,000. Projects are delivered through our approved contractor.
- Funding applications are open once a year at the start of the financial year.

2.5. Completed PERP projects include:

- Clem Attlee - biodiversity/wildflower planting
- Orchard & Cheeseman's - community growing garden
- West Kensington & Gibbs Green- improvements to ball court and multi-use games area and the installation of an outdoor gym
- Woodmans Mews- community growing garden, outdoor gym and playground.

2.6. PERP projects that are underway include:

- Aspen Gardens - improvements to basketball court and repainting of mural with designs from the children of the estate
- Becklow Gardens - improvements to playground
- Barton House- greening the Grey by installing planters and refreshing existing signs

- Field Road- greening the grey by removing concrete slabs and laying biodegradable seed matts pathways
 - Lytton Estate - resurfacing of Multi Games Area (MUGA) as part of a joint project with the Garages team to resolve leaks and ensure the surface is weatherproof
 - Riverside Gardens- improvements to basketball court and repainting of mural with designs from the children of the estate.
- 2.7. The presentation given by residents and officers at the committee meeting will outline more of the benefits and outcomes of the projects.

3. Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency

- 3.1. The resident-led Investment Group is working more closely with the Climate Change Unit to raise awareness of climate change and the steps every one of us can take to do our bit to addressing this.
- 3.2. An Urban Ecology Trail, featuring some of the completed NIP and PERP projects was launched as part of the Climate Carnival events that took place during half-term week in October 2021. The trail is a self-guided tour (on foot or by bike) of key housing projects around the borough. The route was planned to avoid main roads wherever possible and to pass through some of the borough's 19 green flag parks.

4. Housing Resident Involvement Update

- 4.1 The Economy Department works with council housing residents to improve the housing services they receive and to support the communities they are a part of. Our approach is set out in the Resident Involvement Strategy 2019 – 2022:

https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/sites/default/files/section_attachments/resident-involvement-strategy-2019-22.pdf

- 4.2 The strategy was co-produced with residents and has the collective vision of *Make Your Voice Count, No Decision About You, Without You*.
- 4.3 The key priorities of the strategy are:
- Focusing on outcomes
 - Working together
 - Delivering more consistently
 - Improving communication
 - Ensuring continuity
 - For us to keep listening.
- 4.4 We work with residents through an agreed resident involvement structure that includes over thirty listed tenants and residents associations (TRAs), representation forums, service improvement groups, and adhoc engagement activities.

- 4.5 At our central body for resident involvement, called the Housing Representatives Forum, a wide range of housing matters have been discussed and decisions made over the last twelve months on areas such as:
- Changes to the long-term repairs model
 - Implementation of the Defend Council Homes Policy
 - The significant capital works programme designed to make homes and communities safer and better places to live
 - The vital work being undertaken with communities to address the climate and ecological emergency
 - Housing Strategy, Tenancy Strategy, and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy consultations
 - Fire safety and building compliance works taking place
 - The Housing Transformation Programme and establishing a resident-led task and finish group to work with us on this called the Housing Transformation Review Group
 - The progress towards actions as set out in the Resident Involvement Strategy 2019 - 2022
 - Agreement on a revised Resident Expenses Policy that strengthens support for digital inclusion
 - Work with residents as part of the TRA Halls and Rooms Re-opening Task & Finish Group to agree a process for consideration of the safe re-opening of halls for priority activities
 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan for 2021/22.
- 4.6 The Disabled People's Housing Strategy was formally launched at an online Zoom event on 17 September that attracted over 100 attendees. Residents, H&F officers, and representatives from third sector organisations gave informative and engaging presentations to launch the Strategy. The next step is to launch the Disabled Residents Housing Group.
- 4.7 The launch event encouraged a renewed interest from residents in the group, with 12 expressions of interest being received. We'll be holding an introductory group meeting on 4 November 2021 to begin the work of this important group. The group's main focus will be on working with offers in co-production to deliver on the actions that are set out in the Disabled People's Housing Strategy.

5. H&F Community Engagement Strategy

- 5.1 The council has started work on developing a Community Engagement Strategy to ensure that the engagement and inclusion activities we undertake are of a high quality, are joined up and consistent.
- 5.2 A key part of this strategy will be to ensure that we are identifying any gaps in community engagement and addressing these by working with the communities we service, the voluntary sector and local businesses.

- 5.3 We will be co-producing this strategy with residents and working hard to develop approaches to increase participation from not yet convinced individuals and group, and ensuring that H&F is an enabling ally for communities.
- 5.4 A key element of this evolving strategy will be the mapping of community engagement across the borough. This will be done by working with communities, listening to their views and priorities and acting on these. We're in the process of recruiting to a number of Community Organiser roles who will work in the borough to provide advice and guidance for residents, community and voluntary organisations and key partners by supporting the delivery of engagement activities.
- 5.5 The roles will also promote the council's services and policies by signposting to information and activities that will positively impact communities. The initial focus of these roles will be on the continued covid recovery and health and wellbeing of our communities.