

LB Hammersmith and Fulham

Resident Involvement Strategy

Introduction

“This draft Strategy sets out LB Hammersmith and Fulham’s approach to involving residents. We see Resident Involvement as crucial to promoting accountability, providing valued feedback about services and improvement of those services. Whilst we already have some resident involvement the recent review of Resident Involvement showed we needed to do more about involving more tenants, through different ways and with greater input into service delivery than before. This Strategy is the start of the process and will help shape how we involve you as residents in the future.”

Councillor Andrew Johnson, Lead Member for Housing

1. Our principles:
 - a. We will increase the number and diversity of residents involved;
 - b. We will widen the ways in which residents can be involved;
 - c. We will ensure resident involvement delivers continuous improvement, value for money and services shaped by our residents;
 - d. We will ensure residents have the information they need to monitor and make accountable Housing Services.

2. We currently have hundreds of residents involved through Tenants and Resident Associations (TRAs). They play an important role in working with officers and at their best a strong leadership role in their communities. However we know over 1,000 residents have told us that they are interested in being involved in some form. A survey of residents in 2010 showed up to 45% of residents wanted to be involved.

3. We also want to make sure that involvement will reflect the diversity of the resident population and ensure that we engage with young people, people from ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are also given the opportunity to be involved.

4. The 2010 Survey of residents showed support for five key mechanisms of involvement:
 - a. Improving local area - estate inspections and local offers/outcomes (46% of residents);
 - b. Improving customer service – mystery shopping, service improvement panels, quality assessors, satisfaction surveys and focus groups (39% of residents);

- c. Making documents easier to understand - Readers Groups (34% of residents);
 - d. Training for residents with difficulties – complaints handling and learning (31% of residents);
 - e. TRA/ Hammersmith and Fulham Federation of Tenants and Resident Associations (HAFFTRA) – work with TRA and HAFFTRA (29% of residents).
5. Improving local areas. We will make six proposals to involve residents in improving local areas:
- a. We will ensure Resident Involvement is a key part of local housing and technical officers work and they report on this to managers, Councillors and Residents. We will create a cohort of staff champions for resident involvement and provide training for all staff who work closely with residents;
 - b. We will look again at Estate Inspections, including Health and Safety inspections for sheltered accommodation, and ensure the right staff are involved in these and take forward agreed actions with Residents;
 - c. We will look at the learning from our pilots on Local Offers and Partnership Meetings and ensure every resident has the opportunity, supported by workshops, to agree Local Offers in their area or on their service. We will look at involving other landlords and residents where this will benefit the wider community;
 - d. We will ensure residents have access to independent advice if their area is being considered for regeneration;
 - e. We will create opportunities for residents to engage directly with Housing and Technical staff both at TRA meetings and through 'Open Days';
 - f. We will review with residents our approach to Minor Estate Improvement, allowing access of all community groups to the programme and introduce a new resident driven approach to assessing their value for money and effectiveness.
6. Improving customer service. We will make the following proposals to link involvement with customer service:
- a. Introduce a Repairs Working Group, drawn from all residents, that looks critically at the Repairs Service provided. It will examine performance of the Contractors, including the ability to interview them, and compare performance between different areas. It will look at setting targets for 'Right First Time' and monitor performance against this and other targets It will also provide resident input into the contracting of the repairs service including resident members on the Interview Panel;
 - b. We will look at holding workshops to support understanding by residents of how repairs and maintenances works in the Borough;

- c. We will look at setting up other Groups covering areas of interest to residents. These will look at performance in those areas and how this can be improved;
 - d. We will hold focus groups of Residents on their experience of service delivery and use that experience to improve our services;
 - e. We will ensure that when residents have made an impact in terms of services that we openly acknowledge that impact including in our publications.
- 7. Making documents easier to understand. We will set up a Readers Group of residents. This Group will look at all documents being shared with residents to ensure they can be easily understood.
- 8. Training for residents - we will make the following proposals:
 - a. To monitor our approach to Complaints. This will be led by our new Local Residents Panel and will consider the current approach to complaints, residents' experiences of complaints and what learning there is from complaints. This will include working with the Council's Complaints Compliance Manager and take into account changes from the Localism Act.
 - b. We will provide training and support for leading residents to ensure they can act as advocates for other residents.
- 9. Work with TRAs and HAFFTRA. Currently the Council works with over 30 TRAs. TRAs have an umbrella body, HAFFTRA, that supports the work of TRAs through the Tenants Levy. We have some exceptionally strong TRAs that work effectively with officers and provide real leadership in their communities. We would like all TRAs to work towards that high level of achievement. We will make the following proposals:
 - a. To set clear recognition criteria based on good practice internally and elsewhere. This will include return of accounts on time and ensure accountability to residents for the work of their TRAs. We will look to work with our neighbouring Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and see what lessons we can learn from their Gold Standard for TRAs and the benefits to TRAs. This recognition criteria will be in place from 1 April 2012 and based on work with TRAs on agreement of the criteria;
 - b. To set up and run a series of training courses in the first three months of 2012 designed to support TRAs and their Officers to meet the criteria. We will involve TRAs in the recruitment of trainers to deliver this training, or deliver it internally;
 - c. Grants, at least the same as the current amount, will be available for all TRAs that meet the criteria and we will continue to support and monitor compliance with the criteria;
 - d. Our intention is that the key relationship for TRAs with the Council will be through local Housing Officers. They will be the prime Council source of advice and support on improved involvement and service

delivery. There will also be a small administrative resource for the TRAs to support their work and the Strategy itself. Together these will support the TRAs preparation of agendas, leaflets and queries;

- e. We will also ensure that there is a support for auditing of accounts either through the grant payment and/or through identification of resource to support TRAs;
 - f. We will support TRAs joining national resident bodies such as TPAS and TAROE to help gain a wider understanding of issues facing active residents elsewhere;
 - g. Our longer term intention is to work towards an approach like the Kensington and Chelsea Gold Standard for TRAs;
 - h. Once this strategy has been agreed we formally discuss the future of the Tenant Levy, which is due for Review;
 - i. That for all TRA (and other meetings such as Area Forums) there are officers present before the meeting to hold drop-in sessions and allow complaints and concerns to be dealt with effectively.
10. We will also set up a Local Resident Panel. This will lead the comprehensive monitoring of all our services, review the effectiveness of this strategy on a quarterly basis, agree performance targets for the service, monitor complaints and help develop the Annual Report. It will meet monthly and effectively inform the Lead Member for Housing and Director for Housing and Regeneration. It will also liaise with the Oversight and Scrutiny Committee when appropriate.
11. We will consider with members of the Panel the best time for meetings.
12. We will also look afresh at our Area Forums. These do provide an opportunity for some TRA reps to scrutinise our performance in each area although there is currently no wider opportunity for residents to attend or take part. The Council will consider common mission statements, constitutions, code of conduct, agenda setting with the Chair and surgeries before all meetings for individual queries for all Area Forums and discuss with Area Forums about opening the meetings to all residents.
13. We will also look to extend our current approach to training and working with resident inspectors to check out, from a residents perspective, the work we carry out.

14. We know the importance of communication to residents – both in terms of services we provide and the opportunity to be involved. The 2010 Residents survey set out four ways in which residents wanted to be kept informed.
 - a. Leaflets and letters (85% of residents);
 - b. Magazine (47% of residents);
 - c. Resident Groups and TRAs (19% of residents);
 - d. Internet – website groups and E-Panel (16% of residents);
Our work will be supported by developing a protocol with TRAs on communication with them and a core mailing list including TRA contacts.

15. We will make the following proposals in these five areas:
 - a. Maintain and improve our coverage of services and involvement opportunities through our leaflets and letters to you;
 - b. Ensuring that the magazine has resident input into both the content and measuring its effectiveness;
 - c. By maintaining a good level of communication with TRAs through officers and written information so they are well placed to work with their members;
 - d. Opening up how we use the internet including setting up website groups on areas of interest to residents and an E-Panel able to give us quick and easy responses on topical issues.
 - e. Ensure residents on the Local Residents Panel and Repairs Working Group issue quarterly updates to residents about their work.

16. We recognise the strength that comes from the diversity of our residents and the importance of both understanding that diversity and using that understanding to inform our services. We will continue to monitor the diversity of both our residents and those involved to ensure all residents get the same opportunity for good services and involvement. We will look at working with bodies such as the Equality Champion and Advocacy Groups.

17. We will also look at ways to involve young people, for example making links with the Councils Youth Forum.

18. Much of the above will support our relationship with leaseholders. We regard the Leaseholder Forum as a good model of creating opportunities to discuss individual issues beforehand and wider issues at meeting, and those meetings being open to all leaseholders. We will ensure 3 leaseholders are members of the Local Resident Panel/Repairs Panel and invited to join other Panels as appropriate.

19. We will monitor the impact of the Resident Involvement Strategy throughout the year including reporting to the Local Residents Panel quarterly on progress. We will also carry out an annual review of effectiveness working with and reporting to the Local Resident Panel.
20. We will also consider the role of residents in helping understand their views of our policies. We will therefore open up the Borough Forum to all residents and use this as a 'think tank' to explore resident views to help us understand resident views when developing and agreeing policies..
21. We will maintain the Sheltered Housing Forum. We will ensure that residents from Sheltered Schemes are included in the membership of the LRP and RWG.
22. We will develop an expenses policy to ensure no resident is out of pocket when participating. This will include consideration of using vouchers to engage residents who do not normally take part in traditional involvement structures but who want to be involved.
23. To support the above we will develop a detailed work plan that sets out initial activity for the first quarter of 2012 and activity for the remainder of the calendar year.