

**London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham**

**ECONOMIC REGENERATION, HOUSING AND THE ARTS POLICY & ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE**

**5 July 2016**



**UPDATE ON THE RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH RESIDENTS**

**Report of the Director of Housing Services, Nilavra Mukerji**

**Open Report**

**Classification - For Policy & Advisory Review & Comment**

**Key Decision: No**

**Wards Affected: All**

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the Council's work to date on building and increasing resident involvement in the housing service. Increasing resident involvement to help shape and improve services is a key priority and we have summarised the work that has been undertaken, the key achievements over the past 12 months and also outline our priorities going forward.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. The committee is invited to review and comment on the work that has been undertaken and the proposals for the coming period.

## **3. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The local elections in May 2014 resulted in a different approach to working with residents. The new administration was very clear that they wanted to transform the housing service by putting residents at its heart. As a result, our resident engagement activity has increased significantly, especially over the past 12 months. To date we have:

- Worked with residents to develop a Resident Involvement Strategy for 2016 – 2018 (Appendix 1) which commits us to 'Transforming our housing service, putting residents at the heart of decision making' and is aligned with Action 14 of the Housing Strategy (May 2015).
- Developed with residents a resident involvement structure, establishing the agreed groups and forums required.
- Expanded the Resident Involvement Team to reflect the increased priority and to deliver the Resident Involvement Strategy.

### ***Overview of the Improvement Groups, Forums, and Activities***

#### **3.2. Borough Housing Forum**

The Borough Housing Forum continues to provide an opportunity for all Council tenants and leaseholders to engage with us and to develop key policies and strategies, and scrutinising service delivery.

#### **3.3. Housing Representatives Forum**

The Housing Representatives Forum (HRF) was set up in August 2014 and has met monthly since. HRF provides an opportunity for our more involved residents, specifically, our registered Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs), sheltered housing representatives, and gap site and street property representatives to meet. This Forum undertakes more detailed and on-going work with us, and can set up Working Groups as needed to look at a particular area of service

#### **3.4. Sheltered Housing Forum**

The Sheltered Forum has been running for over fifteen years and acts as a consultative body between the Housing Department and its sheltered housing

tenants. For the last year and a half it has met every other month. The principle aim of the Sheltered Housing Forum is to preserve and promote the well-being of sheltered housing tenants

### **3.5. Leasehold Forums**

Leasehold Forums have been in place for the last five years and act as a consultative body between the Housing Department and its leaseholders. The main aim of Leasehold Forums is to work to achieve transparency for leaseholders on costs and charges and to deliver accountability to leaseholders for performance, standards and quality control.

### ***Working Groups that report into the Housing Representatives Forum***

### **3.6. Repairs Working Group**

The Repairs Working Group (RWG) has been up and running since January 2012 and is the primary group established to analyse and monitor the council's repairs contract with Mitie. The RWG has successfully worked with Mitie to improve the service and drive satisfaction.

### **3.7. Communications Group**

The Communications Group has been meeting monthly since November 2015 and aims to ensure effective communication in the delivery of housing services between the Council, its residents, and the contractors with whom we work.

### **3.8. Investment Group**

The Investment Group held its first meeting on 23 June 2015 to review and agree general needs stock Housing Improvement Project (HIP) bids 2015/16. Group also agrees bids that are made to the Groundwork programme of community improvements.

### **3.9. Inclusion Group**

The Inclusion Group has held a series of workshops since December 2015 that have been attended by both residents and representatives from third sector organisations. The long term aim of the group is to tackle social, financial and digital inclusion by making sure that residents are able to access services and participate effectively in decision-making.

### **3.10. Reading Group**

The Reading Group is a virtual group which receives documents by email and post and reviews them to ensure that they are fit for purpose, written in plain English, and can be easily understood.

### ***Working Groups Set Up for Specific Projects***

### **3.11. Caretaking Working Group**

The Caretaking Working Group was developed in support of the Housing Representatives' Forum to improve customer satisfaction in this very important service.

### **3.12. Residents' Conference Planning Group**

The resident-led conference planning group started to meet in October 2015 and is made up of both tenants and leaseholders. The group has been involved in every element of the planning for the Residents' Conference.

## **4. PROGRESS TO DATE, KEY ACHIEVEMENTS & ISSUES**

4.1. We currently have over 150 residents actively involved in helping us to improve our services and develop their communities. Around 20% of currently involved residents became involved for the first time in the last year. A number of which were as a result of 19 estate engagement events that we held throughout the summer of 2015. We held involvement workshop sessions at the Residents' Conference on 18 June 2016 and had over 60 residents take part. The majority of attendees were new to involvement and we signed a number of residents up to involvement opportunities on the day.

### **4.2 Key Achievements**

4.2.1 We have worked with residents at Housing Representatives Forum meetings to develop a Resident Involvement Information Pack (Appendix 2) which was launched at the Residents' Conference on 18 June 2016.

4.2.2 We have worked with Mitie and the RWG to develop a Rant & Rave customer satisfaction monitoring initiative. This will provide us with real-time feedback on resident satisfaction with repairs to their properties.

4.2.3 Worked with the RWG to develop a Repairs Handbook for all council housing tenants.

4.2.4 Worked with residents to develop a Tenants & Residents Association (TRA) Information Pack (appendix 3)

4.2.5 We have worked with three TRAs and the Inclusion Group to scope out a digital inclusion project to provide wireless broadband and IT equipment within community facilities for residents' use.

4.2.6 The Communication Group have improved navigation to and the content of the Council new website and building the Resident Involvement pages.

4.2.7 The Investment Group approved over £500,000 of Housing Improvement Project and Groundwork works during 2015-16.

4.2.8 Assisted residents to deliver a successful Residents Conference, 'Our Homes, Our Future'. Over 400 residents attended the conference and the feedback that was received was that the conference provided an informative and interactive opportunity for residents to learn more about stock transfer and the services that the Housing Department, its contactors, and other partner organisations provide.

4.2.9 The Reading Group have helped us to ensure communication material produced by the Council is in plain English and user friendly.

### 4.3 How we communicate with residents

4.3.1 We communicate with residents in a number of ways. We have over 600 residents who we circulate a regular Get Involved bulletin (Appendix 4) to by email. We also use the website [www.lbhf.gov.uk/residentinvolvement](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/residentinvolvement) to promote our involvement offers. We have developed a Get Involved flyer which has been sent to all council residents along with the quarterly rent statements and service charge information.

4.3.2 Resident involvement in housing has also been heavily promoted in the regular Residents' Commission and Stock Transfer newsletters that have been sent to all council housing residents. We are not currently utilising social media as a method of communicating involvement offers. This is something that we will be working with the Communications Team to consider in more detail in the coming months.

### 4.4 Next Steps & Key Priorities

4.4.1 The Resident Involvement Strategy sets out a series of key priorities, supported by a Delivery Plan (see Appendix 1) which will guide our workplan over the next 12-24 months. The three objectives agreed in the Resident Involvement Strategy 2016 – 2018 strategy are:

- **Objective 1 - Placing greater control and influence at the hands of our residents, making us more accountable for the housing services they receive.**
- **Objective 2 - More involvement, better involvement. We will work with our more involved residents to identify and break down barriers to engagement.**
- **Objective 3 – Promote social inclusion and support thriving and vibrant communities.**

4.4.2 Whilst our approach to date has delivered increased participation and involvement, with some significant achievements, we recognise that some aspects have worked better than others. We will learn from our experience and what residents are telling us and work to support better engagement and drive service improvement.

4.4.3 We will be considering our approach and working with residents to develop a Scrutiny Panel, again included on the original involvement structure, in quarter 3 of 2016/17.

4.4.4 The Service Improvement Team is continuing to scope the potential and opportunity to launch a mystery shopping programme and when this is done residents will be consulted on the proposal. A draft Incentivisation paper has also been developed that is currently awaiting approval.

- 4.4.5 We are developing a Housing Performance Scorecard which will enable residents effectively challenge poor performance and work with officers to undertake an effective quality assurance role.
- 4.4.6 We are working to embed the importance of resident involvement across the housing department by delivering key messages to teams, heads of service, directors and our partners

## **5 CONSULTATION**

- 5.2 *We have a statutory obligation to consult under Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 for where there are any substantial changes or variations. Additional consultation and engagement opportunities have been developed as good practice and goes over and above the statutory obligations for consultation.*
- 5.3 *The Resident Involvement Structure was developed and agreed with resident representatives at the Housing Representatives Forum. It was agreed in January 2015.*
- 5.4 *The Resident Involvement Strategy 2016 - 2018 (Appendix 1) has been developed with the help of the Housing Representatives Forum between December 2015 – May 2016. Residents; input has shaped the final document and determined the key areas of focus for the delivery plan. The resident Reading Group has also reviewed and had an input into the Resident Involvement Strategy 2016 – 2018 from the perspective of readability, content, and style.*
- 5.5 *The Resident Involvement Information Pack (Appendix 2) has been developed by the resident-led Communications Group between March – June 2016. The resident Reading Group and Housing Representatives Forum have also reviewed and had an input into the Resident Involvement Information Pack.*
- 5.6 *The Tenants & Residents Association Information Pack (Appendix 3) has been developed by a task and finish resident-led group called the TRA Information Pack Working Group between May – June 2016. The resident Reading Group and Housing Representatives Forum have also reviewed and had an input into the Tenants & Residents Association Information Pack.*
- 5.7 *The Get Involved bulletins (Appendix 4) are produced on a monthly basis by the Resident Involvement Team and are shared with the Get Involved email list, which contains over 600 residents who have expressed an interest in involvement opportunities over the last two years.*
- 5.8 *The Residents' Conference on 18 June 2016 will also be a key consultation event and an opportunity to promote all involvement opportunities.*

## **6 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.2 *No equality implications have been identified as part of the work on this report. Resident involvement opportunities are open to all council housing residents and our Code of Conduct document (Appendix 5) which is used for all resident forums, groups, and activities sets out that “members should value diversity and not discriminate against any person on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation”. The terms of reference for all of the service improvement groups also state that attendance at Equality & Diversity training is mandatory for all resident members.*

## **7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no legal implications for this report.
- 7.2 Implications verified/completed by: Janette Mullins, Principal Solicitor (Housing Litigation); 020 8753 2744

## **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The functions of involvement and engagement are delivered within the agreed budget for resident involvement. The budget for resident involvement has increased from £63,000 in 2014/15 to £104,100 for 2015/16 and 2016/17 to reflect the increase in the level of involvement and engagement.
- 8.2 By working closely with residents to develop strategies and policies, we know that we are working in an efficient and cost effective way and aiming to get projects right first time. The increased assistance of the Reading Group has meant that we are obtaining value for money and the documents that are issued to residents are fit for purpose.
- 8.3 Implications verified/completed by: Danny Rochford, Head of Finance – Housing - 020 8753 4023.

## **9 IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS**

- 9.1 *There are no identified business implications as a result of the work of resident involvement in housing.*

## **10 BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Description of Background Papers</b>	<b>Name/Ext of holder of file/copy</b>	<b>Department/ Location</b>
	None		

**LIST OF APPENDICES:**

<i>Appendix 1 – Resident Involvement Strategy 2016 – 2018</i>	Pages 19-42
<i>Appendix 2 - Resident Involvement Information Pack</i>	Pages 43-74
<i>Appendix 3 - Tenants &amp; Residents Association Information Pack</i>	Pages 75-96
<i>Appendix 4 – Example of a Get Involved bulletin</i>	Pages 97-104
<i>Appendix 5 - Code of Conduct</i>	Pages 105-108