

## Annex 7 – Draft 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***

Below we have set out our draft Resident Involvement Strategy, with a question for your consideration beneath each section. We would like you to consider what we have proposed, and the question we have listed. Please let us know your thoughts, on these issues, and any others related to Resident Involvement, and we will incorporate them wherever practically possible in the final Strategy.

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.

**Question 1 – do you agree with these principles? Are there others we have missed?**

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.

## **Question 2 – do you agree more residents should 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;
  - b. We will look again at Estate Inspections 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 (sometimes called Neighbourhood Agreements) and ensure every resident has the opportunity to agree Local Offers in their area or on their service;
  - 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.

## **Question 3 – do you agree with these proposals? Are there other ways in which we can involve local residents in improving local areas?**

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 also provide resident input into the contracting of the repairs service including resident members on the Interview Panel;
  - b. 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;
  - c. We will hold focus groups of Residents on their experience of service delivery and use that experience to improve our services;
  - d. We will ensure that when residents have made an impact in terms of services that we openly acknowledge that impact including in our publications.

**Question 4 – do you agree with setting up a Repairs Working Group? Do you agree with setting up other service improvement Groups?**

**Question 5 – are you interested in joining a service improvement or Focus Group?**

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.

**Question 6 – do you agree with setting up a Readers Group?**

**Question 7 – are you interested in joining a Readers Group?**

8. Training for residents - we will make the following proposals:
  - a. To look again at 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;
  - b. We will provide training and support for leading residents to ensure they can act as advocates for other residents.

**Question 8 – do you agree with our proposals for supporting residents? Are there other ways in which we can help?**

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 on 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 will be in place from 1 April 2012 and we will work with TRAs on agreement of the recognition criteria;
  - b. To set up and run a series of training courses 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. We will continue to support and monitor compliance with the criteria;
  - d. 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;
  - e. We will continue to recognise HAFFTRA or a similar group as the umbrella body for TRAs and capture this in a formal agreement setting out the roles and responsibilities of both parties;
  - f. Once this strategy has been agreed we formally discuss the future of the Tenant Levy, which is due for Review;
  - g. That for all TRA (and other meetings such as Area Forums) there are officers present before the meeting to hold a drop-in sessions and allow complaints and concerns to be dealt with effectively.

**Question 9 – do you agree with our approach to TRAs? Are there further improvement we can make?**

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, 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.
11. 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.

12. 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.

**Question 10 – do you agree with setting up a Local Resident Panel to monitor our performance?**

**Question 11 – do you want to be considered for membership of the Panel?**

**Question 12 – do you want to be considered to be one of our resident inspectors?**

13. 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).
14. We will make the following proposals in these four 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.

**Question 13 – do you agree with our proposals on communication? Are there other methods you would like to see in place?**

**Question 14 – do you want to join the E-Panel?**

15. 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 monitor the diversity of both our residents and those involved to ensure all residents get the same opportunity for good services and involvement.

**Question 15 – do you agree with our approach to diversity? Could we do more and if so what?**

16. 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 and invited to join other Panels as appropriate.

**Question 16 – do you agree with our approach to involving leaseholders?**

17. 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.
18. 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.

**Question 17 – do you agree the Borough Forum should be open to all residents?**

19. We will maintain the Sheltered Housing Forum including its useful work in developing Local Offer pilots.

**Question 18 – do you agree with our approach to involving residents in sheltered schemes?**

Thank you for taking the time to read this important document. Please send your comment to:

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