

Housing & Social Inclusion

Resident Involvement Strategy

2011-2016



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Foreword

I am delighted to present the Resident Involvement Strategy. What follows, in this document, will act as a framework for maintaining and increasing resident involvement over the next five years and will ensure that the council maintains its commitment to supporting, developing and increasing the ways tenants and leaseholders influence the services they receive.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many residents who have contributed to the development of this document.

Brighton & Hove City Council has remained at the forefront of including residents in the decision making process for many decades. This document maintains the forward thinking ideals by recognising the difficulty some people have in attending meetings and the need to consider how to find ways of including under-represented groups such as those from the black and minority ethnic communities, younger people and young families in the decision making and opinion setting process.

The strategy sets out clear ways that we can seek to include and involve individual residents in ways and at times to suit them. The strategy also introduces the idea of a tenant led Scrutiny Panel that will take an overview of decisions and actions taken and make suggestions as to how improvements might be made.

New technology and different forms of social media will have a part to play, for example enabling people to take part in citywide meetings, such as the City Assembly through Twitter and Facebook, even though they might not be able to attend in person.

The result of all this will be to make sure that as many residents as possible can be involved at a time and in a way that suits them, and that we continue to work together on developing and growing new ways of involving you in your service.

Liz Wakefield,
Cabinet Member for Housing

Introduction

This Resident involvement Strategy sets out to build on the existing resident participation system, among the council's tenants and leaseholders, seeking to present new opportunities for increasing the number of residents who get involved, whilst also encouraging those that don't normally engage with us to do so. The strategy works within the council's existing Community Engagement Framework and the city's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Our vision for achieving excellence in Housing Management

The Housing Management Service Improvement Plan 2009-2012 aims to '**achieve excellence in housing management with residents at the heart of everything we do**'. The priorities of the plan are to:

- Improve services to an excellent standard, with residents at the heart of everything we do
- Improve the quality and sustainability of our homes and neighbourhoods
- Deliver Value for Money services and maintain a sustainable 30 year business plan
- Make best use of our housing stock to address housing need
- Ensure that social housing provides a platform for reducing inequality and creating opportunity.

Our guiding principles for involving residents

During the development of the Resident Involvement Strategy we agreed with residents the following guiding principles that underpin everything we do when involving residents in the management of their housing:

- Every tenant and leaseholder matters and should be able to have a say in how their housing is managed
- We will offer residents support to be effectively engaged, involved and empowered

- We are committed to equal opportunities and social inclusion in how we deliver services, provide information and involve residents
- We will treat all residents with fairness and respect and expect residents to do the same with staff
- We are committed to openness and transparency with our residents in reaching decisions about our housing stock and providing information about our performance
- We will ensure we meet regulatory requirements on tenant involvement and empowerment and fully involve our tenants in co-regulating our housing management services
- We will increase the areas in which tenants are fully involved by for example introducing tenant led scrutiny and participatory budget setting.

How tenants and leaseholders have been involved in developing this resident involvement strategy

The Tenant Compact Monitoring Group (TCMG) is carrying out a review of the Tenant Compact and has had a key role in developing this strategy. A resident involvement workshop was held by the group, who identified issues that would lead to better resident involvement. This group identified the key themes they want to see reflected in the strategy. These themes form the key objectives of this document, and include an agreement that the development of the strategy is tenant led which will result in a proactive resident involvement network. The outcome from implementing the strategy should deliver more residents getting involved, and clear evidence of how residents contribute to policy development, service delivery and performance improvement.

The TCMG have identified that residents need to be empowered through training and education. Building resident's capacity to be fully engaged was a central theme. This is to include training of all residents that want to get involved, making sure that special provision is made for encouraging younger residents gain the skills and enthusiasm to become fully engaged. Group members seek to change perceptions around resident involvement, and want to raise the expectations of those that do volunteer. They want to have more influence on decision making, and also be in a position

to demonstrate this. Good communication is seen as central to the success of the Strategy. The TCMG want the council to become excellent at this, whilst accepting that resident representatives will need to develop their communication skills as well. The members of the group want the strategy to focus on ways of providing more information, both to residents from the council and from resident representatives to their resident members. They also want to see more front line staff being trained on resident involvement. Caring for other residents was a central theme identified and one that the group members felt would lead to the encouragement of more respect within the involvement system.

As well as developments from the TCMG workshop, resident representatives' were invited and responded to a communications and profile survey in April 2009. Their priorities are reflected in this document. Residents responded to an involvement survey sent to all tenants and leaseholders in December 2009. The results were encouraging as over 15% responded. 95% of those that responded want their names retained in a database of those that would want to become further involved in a number of ways.

The TCMG then took each strategy as identified in the draft document and set up four working groups to look at each one in detail. Each group also considered and made changes to the rest of the document taking into account residents and staff responses to the involvement survey. The 'objectives groups' work was presented to the full TCMG to approve.

Our Resident Involvement Strategy objectives

Through our consultation with residents we have agreed the following objectives for delivering the Resident Involvement Strategy 2011 – 2016

- Objective 1** **Provide a wide range of opportunities for residents to be involved in their housing**

- Objective 2** **Develop, a framework for agreeing local offers and priorities with our residents**

- Objective 3** **Involve residents in the development of housing policy and the design and delivery of housing services**

- Objective 4** **Involve residents in monitoring and scrutinising our performance in delivering housing services**

Objective 1

Provide a wide range of opportunities for residents to be involved in their housing

You have told us that you would like:

- To be more involved in decisions that affect you or your local area
- An extended menu of ways to get involved, from serving on formal groups and answering questionnaires, to other less formal ways like personal visits by officers and joining in to social networks to make your views known, helping to bring about improvements in your neighbourhood (see table showing involvement commitment on page 19)
- To be supported through training and workshops to develop the confidence, skills and capacity to engage with housing services in a way that is right for you
- To broaden the opportunity for involvement to encourage participation from sections of the resident population not currently as involved.
- Regular city-wide gatherings and for as many residents as possible to be invited to the City Assembly; the twice yearly forum where all residents' associations meet and debate issues of interest to residents across the city
- To see a high level of flexibility in the timing of meetings and methods of contact by officers. To make sure that all meetings (including tenant and leaseholders only meetings) are reflected in the community participation calendar through one officer
- All residents to be given the contact name and phone number of the Chair of their local association. This contact information should be on all association notice boards and on housing offices notice boards
- To see a continually updated list of all tenants and leaseholders groups and the roles of each officer published in Homing in and on the council website
- To see minutes of all groups on the council website
- Opportunities to be involved in the management of your homes.

Our strategic actions to deliver this objective are:

- Help associations to adopt a surgery approach allowing members to discuss problems with committee members
- Encourage younger members of each household to join in with consultation activities by including in appropriate questionnaires to the household specific questions designed for younger members
- To make more use of social media and emerging technologies to provide more opportunities for communication and involvement
- Make clear to residents who can get travel and or child care support to meetings
- Provide all residents with the contact information for out of hours service
- Continue to ask all tenants and leaseholders how they would like to be involved in the management of their housing and record their preferences in our new database.
- Use tenant preference information to invite interested residents to participate in their preferred ways and preferred topic areas
- Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved
- Improve the training and development programme for residents who wish to become involved by continuing to utilise the Resource Centre, and providing coaching and support by the Housing Management Community Participation Officers
- Provide training workshops to resident groups to look for ways to increase involvement
- Publicise opportunities and arrangements for resident involvement and empowerment
- Work with partners to engage a broader range of residents, eg Children's & Families to develop links with groups representing young people
- Provide tenants with a range of opportunities to scrutinise our performance against agreed standards
- Provide on the council's website a list of all groups with the responsibility of their officers and an opportunity for each group to post their minutes on the website.

Objective 2

Develop a framework for agreeing local offers and priorities with our residents

You have told us you would like:

- Area Housing Management Panel meetings to be focused on issues that affect the local area, and City Assembly meetings to be concerned with city-wide issues
- Locally based issues identified by residents to be resolved locally (either through the local tenants association working with Housing Officers or by individuals not working in a group who make contact with the housing officer or tenant association rep)
- Housing Officers to spend less time on administration and more time engaging with the residents who live in their neighbourhood. Housing management advisers to take over the administration role in the office
- More detailed and local information on what maintenance and improvement works are planned to help you decide what additional improvements to use your Estate Development Budget (which you control and very much value) to bid for each year
- Tenant's profile information which is recorded on the council's computer system to be used to support tenants and leaseholders who want to be involved in setting local priorities.

Also you would like to be involved in:

- Agreeing priorities and standards of service delivery that reflect what is important to you at a local, neighbourhood and city-wide level
- Prioritising local improvements to your estates and neighbourhoods (through regular estate inspections carried out to the standard of the 'rate your estate' pilot in Moulsecoomb that detail work needing to be done, utilising the estate development budget and capital investment programme).

Our strategic actions to deliver this objective to you are:

- Provide a quarterly timetable of local estate inspections by residents, Housing Officers, and Councillors that must be adhered to:
 - Identify what is important to residents in their estate or neighbourhood and agree local priorities
 - Identify specific items of work needing to be completed. You have indicated that repairs and maintenance, issues affecting your tenancy or property, and anti social behaviour are high in your consideration of work to be done
 - Resolve issues locally as far as possible
 - Report back on agreed actions
 - Evaluate the quality of the local service
- Encourage all residents who wish to, to take part in their local estates inspections
- Housing officers and community wardens will increase their engagement and communication with resident associations and individual residents
- Increase the local focus of Area Panels by presenting outcome feedback reports that summarise the work done at local level over the last quarter, leading to agreement on neighbourhood priorities and the setting of local offers
- Build local priorities into service plans and involve residents in the development of the capital investment programme through the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group and Asset Management Panel working together
- Involve residents in the follow up and management of city wide long term issues agreed at the City Assembly through feedback based on agreed actions
- Work with residents to continually improve neighbourhoods
- Through our local offers we will offer commitments to tenants on
 - Local standards of performance
 - How performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants
 - Outline what will happen if we do not meet our local offers
 - Have in place arrangements for reviewing local offers on a periodic basis.

Objective 3

Involve residents in the development of housing policy and the design and delivery of housing services

You have told us you value:

- Your representative's involvement in developing housing policy and influencing our strategic priorities at Housing Management Consultative Committee. You also value the role and influence of your representatives at Area Panels and other resident groups such as the Sheltered Housing Action Group and the Estates Service Review Group in reviewing and shaping housing services
- Your representative's full involvement at every stage of the procurement of the new repairs, maintenance and improvement partnership; the laundry equipment contract; and choice of contractors
- Your representative's involvement in developing a Brighton & Hove standard for improvements to tenants' homes.

You also want to be more involved in:

- Developing and delivering change and improvement
- Developing housing services you can access easily
- Establishing the strategic priorities of the service
- The direct testing of the services you receive (for example, mystery shopping) and giving feedback on your experiences
- Developing a clear and accessible policy for responding to complaints and using the policy to improve services and receive regular reports on how improvements have been made.

You would like:

- To have more choice over the services you receive
- Tenants and leaseholders with additional support needs, to be involved in the design of housing services and to be provided with facilities to help them do that
- To be part of an involvement system that considers equality issues and the diversity of residents
- A clear line of communication to responsible officers when things go wrong, and an undertaking that officers will always make contact with you or your representatives to address the issues that concern you.

Our strategic actions to deliver this objective to you are:

- Work with you to strengthen the tenant participation structure for consultation on policy and plans. This will be done through a tenant compact review
- Continue to involve you in all aspects of the service, including adopting new approaches for deeper involvement in budget setting
- Continue the work of the Asset Management Panel (AMP) and the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group (RMMG) in the long term planning and operational delivery of the 10 year repairs, maintenance and improvement partnering contract
- Manage and operate resident involvement by mutual respect and trust through for example the code of conduct agreement governing resident involvement and the powers of the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group (TCMG)
- To use your views obtained through focus groups, panels, mystery shopping questionnaires, telephone surveys, on-line forums and other ways as appropriate, to review and improve performance in areas such as:
 - Cleaning of common areas and grounds maintenance
 - Health and safety
 - Security in the neighbourhoods, including dealing effectively with anti social behaviour

- Continue to involve you when we are considering making a significant change in how we manage of our housing stock
- Feedback how your individual or group responses to consultation has impacted on decisions or services by having regular ‘You said, we did’ feedback in our resident magazine *Homing in*
- Develop and add to the range of ways that make it easier for you to express a complaint, and give details about what to do if you are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint
- Develop, agree and monitor service pledges for complaints with you and make sure that complaints and other feedback are managed and resolved promptly, politely and fairly
- Develop a way for reporting good and bad performance to focus on all services provided by the council
- Continue to involve you in the planning, delivery and management of the new repairs and improvement partnership.

Objective 4

Involve residents in the monitoring and scrutinising our performance in delivering housing services

You have told us that you would like:

- To be involved in developing how performance is monitored, is communicated, and how you will be able to scrutinise it
- Performance reports that are presented to you to include comparisons with performances of other social housing landlords, particularly top performers
- Performance measurements to be outcome focused and based on what is of value to you, in addition to the performance measures set by government

- Independent access to facilities that will allow you to compare performance with other landlords
- Independent access to regulatory body if performance is consistently below what you want
- To be involved in reviewing of local offers
- To be involved in the monitoring of the quality and performance of the new repairs and improvement partnership.

Our strategic actions to deliver this objective are:

- Increase the range of opportunities for you to inspect our performance carefully through resident led scrutiny
- Adopt a co-regulation approach. We will provide training and support to help increase local skills and involvement to make co-regulation effective
- Report on our performance monitoring plan which will include information to residents on
 - Definition of each performance indicator
 - The source, method, frequency and schedule of performance reports
 - The office, team, or individual responsible for ensuring performance reports are available on schedule
- Involve you in what performance information is reviewed and presented and how it is used to inform decisions
- Provide you with links to the regulator's web portal and benchmarking organisations, so you can independently compare our performance with other landlords and contact the regulator about our performance
- Produce an annual report with you and for tenants setting out
 - Our performance against our regulator's standards in the previous year
 - Our performance against local offers in the previous year
 - How you have been involved in scrutinising our performance
 - How we have used external validation, peer review and benchmarking, where appropriate to gauge the impact of our actions
- Develop training in performance monitoring and scrutiny as an opportunity for you to be

effectively engaged

- Maintain residents on the Core Group monitoring the quality and performance of the new repairs and improvement partnership
- Ensure you have the opportunity to measure and scrutinise how effective this Resident Involvement Strategy is
- Involve you in any review of democratic arrangements to ensure we are involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the housing management service in the best way.

Glossary of terms

- Strategy – The planning of our vision. Identifying our objectives and how we aim to achieve them.
- Service pledges – The commitments residents have identified as most important and Housing Management Consultative Committee have pledged to deliver.
- Local offers – These are the service pledges identified by you.
- Residents – Includes all tenants and leaseholders.
- BME – Those tenants and leaseholders from a Black and minority ethnic background.
- TCMG – Tenant compact monitoring group, these members elected at area panels, oversee the running of the tenant and leaseholder's participation structure.
- Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) – Tenants sit on this group with councillors. It is where policies and policy changes are discussed and taken forward to cabinet for final decision making.

Appendix 2 Future development options

- Maintain and build on the 'community focus' of the participation system, emphasising stronger communities as well as resident involvement, working with groups and companies that are already working in a particular community or subject area we are interested in
- Forge closer links between resident groups and existing community ethnic organisations that residents belong to. This would help with initial contacts and consultation opportunities of residents from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, as residents are drawn by the cultural and faith based activities of these groups
- Some residents from BME backgrounds would prefer the use of less written communication whilst using the phone more to contact and involve residents. There are some issues to do with language and others to do with literacy that are barriers to effective involvement. So continuing to develop accessibility for all is a main priority
- The TCMG would like a residents forum for BME residents to be set up
- Involve vulnerable residents that are being supported to maintain their tenancies by developing a peer led project to encourage other residents in this group to join in
- Target the involvement of younger residents by developing the 'sign post of ideas' presented in 'Successfully engaging young people in participation'. This considers the present barriers to participation, communicating with young people and encouraging combined staff and residents associations
- Encourage residents to become members of frontline teams within the participation system to build team work towards service delivery goals. This is an opportunity to get involved and will lead to opportunities for personal development
- Organise a recognition day for achievements in participation during the year. This will be celebrated at a yearly 'golden lunch' where awards will be given out in recognition of volunteering
- Set up a marketing and communication central resident and staff group to develop and promote strategic activities for the year. The group will devise marketing plans in relation to the resources available.