



CABINET

15th December 2021

Subject Heading:

Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2025

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Joshua Chapman, Lead Member for Housing

SLT Lead:

Patrick Odling-Smee, Director of Housing

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Policy context:

This is a new strategy developed in response to changes in the social housing sector in recent years and to ensure the council's continued compliance with all current legislative and regulatory requirements.

Financial summary:

It is anticipated that the implementation of this strategy will not have any direct financial implications, other than what is already set out within other Housing related strategies, e.g. Housing Asset Management Strategy.

Is this a Key Decision?

No. This report is for noting only

When should this matter be reviewed?

This is a 3 year strategy to 2025, however implementation of the commitments in this strategy should be monitored and reviewed annually to ensure delivery.

Reviewing OSC:

Towns and Communities

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering
Places making Havering
Opportunities making Havering
Connections making Havering

[x]
[x]
[x]
[x]

SUMMARY

Respecting our residents

Havering Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2025

Cleaner, Safer, Prouder Together

1. Background

- 1.1 The housing directorate has been developing a new strategy that sets out how we want to improve communication and engagement with our residents - Council Tenants and Leaseholders, over the next 3 years.
- 1.2 Following the sad events of the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, and the subsequent public enquiry, in November 2020, the Government published their '**Charter for Social Housing Residents' (White Paper)**. This document sets out seven key priorities for providers of social housing and new powers for the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) and Housing Ombudsman, to hold social landlords to account.
- 1.3 A cornerstone of the Housing White Paper is changing the culture of housing providers and how they interact with their tenants and leaseholders. The focus is on health and safety, accountability and transparency, and tenant empowerment.
- 1.4 The White Paper sets out what every social housing resident should expect from their provider: ***"To be safe in your home; To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly; To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in; To be supported to take your first step to ownership; To know how your landlord is performing."***
- 1.5 Commitment four specifically states residents should expect:- ***"To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants."***
- 1.6 Commitment five states:- ***"To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The Government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens."***
- 1.7 Alongside a review of the Consumer Standards, the RSH will consult on the introduction of a national set of '**Tenant Satisfaction Measures**' to be introduced in summer 2022 with first year of collection commencing in April 2023. Local Authority and ALMO landlords are being treated the same as any other Registered Housing Provider in meeting the required regulatory standards and a new inspection regime is expected at least every four years.

*Jane Everton, Deputy Director of Social Housing at MHCLG - speaking at last year's HQN conference said: "Government is re-booting consumer regulation to ensure landlords adopt the right behaviours and can be held to account for their actions by tenants. **This is the heart of the White Paper**".*

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is proposed that Cabinet note the content of the proposed Havering Housing Resident Engagement Strategy attached to this report, (*Appendix 1*) along with the approach, timescales and rationale set out within this report and in our proposed action plan.

REPORT DETAIL

3. Resident Engagement Strategy – methodology used

Consultation

- 3.1 Havering Housing Services is committed to not only meeting, but exceeding, the ***Charter for Social Housing Residents*** and associated compliance around engaging effectively with our tenants and leaseholders.
- 3.2 Housing Services already carries out extensive consultation with residents and stakeholders to ensure we listen to what they are telling us about our service, and act upon this feedback.
 - A satisfaction survey (STAR) of tenants and leaseholders in summer 2020 was commissioned to learn more about how satisfied customers are with housing services. Over 3,000 council tenants and leaseholders responded to this survey. Analysis of the findings and trends gave us some key areas of focus for improvements to the existing council housing service.
 - These included improving – “*listening to residents views and acting on them*”. – Although 58% of residents said they “*consider Havering to be good at keeping residents informed*”, this isn’t a high enough figure, so there is room for improvement.
 - Whilst 72% of residents told us they “are satisfied with the service they received the last time they used the repairs service” overall satisfaction was lower. So as part of the new repairs of maintenance contract the Property Services team are currently developing new ways of working that will increase our engagement with residents. This will include more detailed satisfaction surveys and a systematic approach to gathering and recording resident feedback. In this strategy we are also looking to develop service specific resident panels as a sub group of the Resident Participation Panel, that will monitor the contractor performance. We are confident that this approach will lead to improved resident satisfaction.
- 3.3 Before commencing development of the Resident Engagement Strategy, we presented the vision and draft aims, along with proposed consultation questions to: -

- Elected Members at Theme Board 28 July 2021
- Senior Leadership Team (SLT) 30 July 2021

Following findings from the consultation, strategy development with: -

- Housing SMT 28 October 2021
 - Housing Resident Participation Panel workshop meeting on 23 November 2021.
- Full statutory public consultation was undertaken on the vision and draft aims of this Resident Engagement Strategy between 03 August 2021 to 05 October 2021.
 - Staff workshops and resident focus groups were undertaken to better inform development of the strategy. In total we received direct feedback from 234 tenants and leaseholders who completed the online survey. In addition during the summer Housing Community Engagement roadshows were carried out we visited a number of estates and spoke residents about resident engagement. In all approx. 300 residents have contributed to the development of this strategy.
- 3.4 Analysis of the outcomes from the consultation took place in November 2021 and this overwhelmingly confirmed that the four aims of the strategy were the right ones for council housing services to focus on over the next three years: -
- *To develop a collaborative resident engagement culture within Housing*
 - *To engage and involve residents to help us improve services*
 - *To deliver a right first time service*
 - *To embrace digital communication and engagement.*
- 3.5 This customer, stakeholder and staff feedback has shaped the direction of new Resident Engagement Strategy, particularly in relation to the opportunities offered for residents to get involved with Havering Housing Services as their landlord.
- 3.6 There is a significant groundswell of residents that say they would engage and 'get involved' if the opportunity and support were available, (**197** residents expressed they want to see regular updates of the engagement opportunities available to them. **73** residents would like to be involved with Housing Services activities with 105 saying *maybe*.)
- 3.7 This is especially true when we offer the option of ways to input into service delivery using digital engagement as the table below shows: -

Top 5 activities residents told us they would like to participate in.	Percentage of respondents
Occasional short surveys following a completion of a service (transactional – online)	73.9
Complete postal / online questionnaires	53.42
Focus Groups on specific service areas (virtual, face to face or hybrid)	32.5
Service improvement workshops to guide future service planning	29
Mystery Shopping	25
Online Mystery Shopping	21

- 3.8 Timescale – pending any amendments to this draft Resident Engagement Strategy, we hope to be in a position to publish the document in January 2022.
- 3.9 A comprehensive action plan is attached to this report at *Appendix 2*.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

- 4 **Reasons for the decision:** Havering Housing Services is a registered social housing landlord and is therefore required to meet all relevant government legislation in delivery of a housing service.
- 4.1 Relevant policies to the new Housing Strategy include: -
- Building Safety Bill 2021
 - **Charter for Social Housing Residents White Paper** * (November 2020) - changes to the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) and Housing Ombudsman.
* (See notes in background section)
- 4.2 Alongside a review of the current Consumer Standards, the RSH are consulting on the introduction of a national set of '**Tenant Satisfaction Measures**' to be introduced in summer 2022 with first year of collection commencing in April 2023.
- 4.3 Publishing a Housing Resident Engagement Strategy that sets out how Havering Housing Services will work in partnership with tenants and leaseholders, and the communities they live in, to improve the housing service, making a positive difference to all residents and the wider community, will put the council in a good position when the new RSH inspection regime is announced.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: There is no expected additional financial expenditure arising from this strategy. Resident Engagement team budget will support the delivery of the action plan, where there is service related spend this has been already taken into account.

Legal implications and risks: There are existing statutory duties to consult with leaseholders and secure tenants pursuant to section 20 Landlord and Tenant Act for leaseholders (where there are to be major works or qualifying long terms contractual agreements entered into where a certain financial threshold is met) and section 105 Housing Act 1985 for secure tenants (where there is a matter of housing management they will be substantially impacted by). The resident engagement strategy aims to go beyond these statutory requirements to create a broader meaningful consultation culture with collaborative resident engagement. However, officers should ensure that where the requirements for statutory consultation are met that the consultation is compliant with those statutory requirements. It is noted that the Charter for Social Housing is a Government White Paper and that regulatory changes are proposed arising from this. Any changes to Regulations/ introduction of new Regulations should

be monitored so that the Council's Strategy can be varied as necessary once Regulations are implemented to ensure compliance.

Human Resources implications and risks: The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the council or its workforce.

Equalities implications and risks: A comprehensive EQHIA has been completed, No negative impacts have been identified. (*Appendix 3*)

Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks: Havering council is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of its residents. The provision of good quality and affordable housing is an important determinant of health and wellbeing as housing impacts both our physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The Housing Resident Engagement strategy and its action plan will provide increased opportunities for residents to receive guidance and support on various issues including on health and wellbeing concerns. The action plan sets out how the housing service will work with communities to tackle loneliness, employability and provided targeted engagement opportunities for hard to reach groups such as young people. Our local neighbourhood initiatives such as Estate or community roadshows will ensure that Residents can access support easily, particularly for those who may be digitally excluded. We will ensure that we work with partner agencies such as public health and social care to support initiatives that look to improve both physical and mental wellbeing for residents, e.g. enabling early identification of issues that might impact negatively on health & wellbeing and putting place mitigation measures. Housing service are already supporting residents visiting the community hubs, as part of the strategy we would look to build on this by offering training to residents, advice on managing debt and signposting them to how to access support from other areas of the council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 –Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2025

Appendix 2 –Action Plan

Appendix 3 –EQHIA