

# Havering Resident engagement and participation strategy 2024 to 2027



**Havering**  
LONDON BOROUGH

## Leader Foreword



*“We look forward to building on the work we already do with our communities as they are imperative in helping our borough be the best place it can be.”*

**Councillor Ray Morgon,  
Leader of Havering  
Council.**

Havering Council knows that at the heart of everything it does, it is on behalf of our residents. Through the services that we deliver we are very much an intrinsic part of our communities.

As a new Administration, it was clear to us that residents wanted to be more involved in decision making. They also wanted us to be more open and transparent. Central to our commitments to residents was to work with, listen more and make sure that they are better informed and engaged with decision making.

As part of this we have wanted to focus on improving our resident engagement and participation. This strategy sets out how we will do this. We recognise that our communities have untapped knowledge and expertise that can be used to help us deliver better services. We also know that residents want to get more involved.

Our population is becoming more diverse and we need to make sure all residents have their voices heard, in particular from our youth groups.

Therefore this strategy aims to do the following:

- Build reputation and trust by listening to residents and acting on concerns.
- Demonstrate community leadership.
- On-line surveys, focus groups, one-to-one meetings or other channels of communication.
- Encourage participation and involvement in delivery of community services by co-ordinating specific campaigns and projects (community clean-ups, mentoring of pupils, parks friends groups, library groups, etc.).
- Develop a consistent approach to community consultation and engagement, embedding Gunning Principles and encouraging collaboration. Gunning Principles are the principles that form the legal foundation from which the legitimacy of public consultation is assessed.
- Provide intelligence to support council-wide policy development.
- Evolve service over time from information and engagement to empower residents.

# What do we mean by resident engagement and participation?

## What is participation?

Participation is the involvement of communities in the design and delivery of projects and services that solve local issues or bring benefits and improvements to their environments.

When the Council refers to community participation, we mean the extent to which a community or a group of people has been actively involved in the work we are doing in the borough.

We know that different communities will participate to varying degrees at different times, and we want to make sure that we are encouraging the most meaningful participation at the right time with the appropriate communities.

Where possible, we want to ensure that the residents and communities of Havering have as much empowerment as possible in resolving the issues that affect them.





## What are the benefits of community participation?

Involving residents and communities in our decision-making enables communities to have a say in determining the future of their local area and gives them confidence that their say matters. It also helps them understand better why changes take place in services and enables them to help inform policy and strategies.

In addition to this, ongoing community participation enables us to build trust with the community and in doing so we are then better placed to have open, transparent conversations about the options and resources available and why some actions may not work as well as others. We know that this is a much better approach than simply consulting on decisions that have already been taken. It also generates better outcomes.

Greater community participation can also lead to improved health and wellbeing for our residents.

Encouraging residents to participate in community life, build social connections, invest in supportive relationships, and have a say in local decisions are all factors that contribute towards good health.

In addition to this, entrenched health inequalities are best addressed in partnership with the community and participatory approaches towards service delivery directly address the perceptions of powerlessness felt by some communities. Furthermore, a community-centred approach supports our preventative agenda.

By working with communities, we are better able to address the wider determinants of health, and the precursors of more serious issues.

These include:

- Tackling isolation for our older population.
- Diversionary activities to deter youth ASB.
- Addressing Housing issues and needs.
- Giving residents a voice and fostering a trusting relationship with Council teams.

**Finally, community participation is good for our democracy.**

We want our residents and communities that make up the borough to have confidence in us as an approachable, open, and honest local authority and to have trust in the processes that we put in place. In addition, greater community involvement and ownership could help the Council by potentially creating savings through a better network of volunteers to help deliver certain projects and services for the wider community.

**A healthier community will also lead to less pressure on the NHS and social care which will lead to better use of resources and money.**

## Review of current provision

### A review was conducted to see what the current engagement provision is at the council

The findings found that currently most of our engagement activity involves informing and consulting residents around key areas as appropriate, with some examples of involvement and collaboration with residents. The review also found that:

- A 'hub and spoke' model should be implemented for community engagement so there is a joined up approach for all engagement across the council and partners.
- We have a spread of teams and individuals who are engaging with residents and forums.
- There is no strategic wide plan around how we engage with residents with the exception of the Housing service.
- Other than in Housing, there is no corporate capture of feedback, data and information to help wider policy making.
- We need to create a broader range of approaches and tools to engage. This is particularly important given rapid changes in population demographics.
- It is important we understand digital poverty particularly among older people to ensure nobody is left out.
- We have no permanent in-house officer for regeneration engagement.
- We need to coordinate databases held across the Council to better inform engagement.
- We need to have clear 'you said, we did' feedback loops.
- The community needs to be enabled to lead more.
- We need to build community resilience and trusted relationships.

In addition, some services deliver a form of engagement activity with different resident or user groups showing pockets of good practice and expertise. This includes Children's, Adult services and Housing.



## What about current forums?

### As a council we have some developed forums

In Housing these include a Resident Participation Panel and sub groups including Homeowner Forum and Repairs group.

The Community Engagement and Participation Team lead on managing a number of other forums. The groups supported include:

- The Havering Compact
- The Green Forum

In addition there are also community associations, friends of parks groups, BME (Black, Minority, Ethnic), Interfaith Forum, Youth Parliament and Over 50s Forum.

These act as important sounding boards when forming policy and delivering services. They are also a key part of our engagement with our wider communities.

Any work taking place with these groups needs to be formalised, and joined up to correlate with wider resident engagement.

## What about Ward members?

Our councillors, have a key part to play in working with residents and are the front line in feeding back issues and dealing with problems.

At the same time they also have a role to play when consultations take place on key issues. This means they need to be kept informed and supported by officers.

The governance structure supporting this is being reviewed so that it is more robust and efficient.

What is important is that members are elected as community voices. They are always speaking to their local communities and have a good understanding of local issues that affect them.

This is why they have a key role in working with residents and ensuring key issues are fed back to the Council as well as making sure residents are updated on progress and service changes.

## Case studies of what we have done well



### Budget consultation 2024/25

Each year councils need to consult residents, businesses and stakeholders on their budget plan.

Havering launched its consultation in October 2023 and it ran for 12 weeks.

This was the second year of the new Administration and it was a key priority for them to make sure residents were fully informed, engaged and consulted on the key issues affecting the finances.

A plan was delivered to get the best results that included face to face sessions with residents, an online consultation, advertising on all council communication channels, a leaflet to every household setting out the challenge, a 'did you know' campaign setting out where spend goes, plus supporting PR and engagement by ward councillors with their constituents.

This was the second year running that we received over 3,000 responses to our budget consultation and more than a 700% increase on any responses we had ever received before.

This was also the first year we ran a separate consultation on the budget for young people to capture their voice. 423 responses were received and analysed.

Budget proposals were changed as a consequence of resident feedback in both years.



## Case studies of what we have done well

### Friends of parks

Havering has an amazing amount of parkland and protected countryside, making it one of the greenest London boroughs.

In fact green spaces cover more than half of the borough.

The Council manages approximately 100 different sites varying in size from small village greens to large urban parks, such as Dagnam and Bedford's Park.

Friends of Parks groups are volunteers who act on behalf of the communities who use and care about our vital public green spaces.

In Havering we are fortunate to have a large number of people who actively support the parks through their local Friends groups.

The groups carry out a range of tasks that improve the parks and supplement the works of the grounds maintenance team.

There are currently 17 groups in Havering and by working in partnership with the Council, other public bodies and funders, Friends groups, once constituted, have found that they are in a position to apply for grants from external funders to complement the Council's resources.

This means that even more improvements can be made.

The successes that have been enjoyed by the now-established Friends groups have led to more communities wanting to improve their own local park.

Havering Council in 2023 successfully retained its 16 Green Flags for the third year in a row.

A Green Flag Award means the parks boast the highest possible standards, are well maintained and have excellent facilities.

The recognition is awarded by environmental charity, Keep Britain Tidy.

The Council has listened to the requests that have been made for more information, help and support, and has developed a response to this, including:

- A guide to help Friends Groups.
- Help with the provision of training.
- Giving advice on insurance.
- Giving on-going information and support.
- What they tell us and how we respond.





## Case studies of what we have done well

### What is the Core20plus5 Programme?

The Core20plus5 programme is an NHS funded programme to tackle health inequalities in the most deprived areas and promote health.

The programme is joint working between the Council, NHS and many different organisations that signed up to it.

The Core20plus5 can be broken down separately to explain why the programme has this title.

#### Core20

– is for the most deprived 20% of the national population identified by the National Index of Multiple Deprivation. The NIMD uses information on health, green spaces, make up of population, income and several other factors.

#### plus

– are the population groups that should be included in the programme, these are ethnic minority groups, people with learning difficulties and autism, long term health conditions, as well as all protected characters of the Equalities Act 2010.

#### 5

– these are the 5 clinical areas to focus on, which require improvement:

1. Maternity
2. Severe Mental Illness
3. Chronic Respiratory disease
4. Early cancer diagnoses
5. Hypertension – blood pressure



Havering started their journey in September 2022 in Harold Hill and has now reached out into Rainham.

The programme is made up of community connectors (volunteers) that promote health and find out what inequalities/barriers the community are having to access health.

This is monitored by the NHS through monthly reports so that they can shape their services to combat some of the issues that the community are facing. The programme is recognised as one of the best of its type in England by the Core20plus5 programme.

## Case studies of what we have done well

### Cost of Living / Cool and Warm Places

The cost of living is affecting a lot of people in Havering.

In addition to the work being done to signpost residents to help, we have:

- Secured £100k from NHS North East London Healthy Partnerships. This fund has enabled a wide range of venues to open or continue as Warm Places for residents, to reduce health inequalities and loneliness. There are approximately 25 venues across the Borough which are providing a warm place for residents.
- Secured 4 venues in Harold Hill and Harold Wood working in partnership with Age UK, H.A.D., Salvation Army and St. Georges Centre to provide and manage 1-2 weekly sessions each with refreshments, lunches and activities free of charge to residents.
- Secured 3 venues in Rainham and South Hornchurch working in partnership with The Royals Centre, Mardyke Centre and St. Johns and St. Matthews who are providing a warm place through 1-2 weekly sessions each with free refreshments, lunches and activities for residents.
- A wide range of partnership work has been undertaken to provide themed activities at each venue.



## Case studies of what we have done well

### Green Forum / Climate Change Community Champions programme

The Green Forum has now held several meetings having been initially developed with residents. This is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change. So far the following has taken place:

- Secured £9,965.00 from the National Lottery. This programme seeks to engage with residents and businesses to understand the things they can do to support the wider Borough and Planet Green Agenda.
- Have been working in partnership with Havering Volunteer Centre to deliver this programme and the recruitment of volunteer Climate Change Champions.
- A wide range of partners are engaged and involved in this programme to deliver the differing elements of climate change. The programme works in synergy with the Havering Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.



## 6 Key principles

We have some key principles to set out how we can improve the current engagement offer. They can be encapsulated in the following six key principles:

- 1 We ask**
- 2 We listen and involve**
- 3 We know ‘one size doesn’t fit all’**
- 4 We learn**
- 5 We come to you**
- 6 We are open, honest and accountable**

These principles will be the litmus test to which we aspire to in all that we do to improve how we work with residents in the future.

We will ensure these link to the Gunning Principles of Consultation in that:

- All proposals will be at a formative stage.
- We will ensure residents have sufficient information.
- There is adequate time for consideration and response.
- ‘Conscientious consideration’ will be given to responses before a decision is made.



## How will we do this?

It is important we improve our internal practices and create a corporate service to support this work. In addition the following needs to take place:

- Improve our internal practices and create a corporate service to support this work.
- Make sure the Engagement Team has the latest training as well as learn from best practice.
- Work with teams across the Council to develop a new approach to communicating on both upcoming decisions and decisions that have already been made.
- Adopt a simplified approach to communications, so that the language we use is easy to understand and briefings on council projects are aimed specifically at the neighbourhoods that they most affect.
- Continue to work with teams across the Council to encourage better consultation and engagement, including better targeted consultations, better consultation results reporting, feedback and involvement of consultees during consultation design.
- Widely promote the benefits of meaningful engagement, showcasing occasions where engagement has influenced the final outcome, helping to create an organisation-wide culture in which the benefits of resident involvement are widely recognised, 'You said, We did'.
- Ensure that the community engagement being carried out by different teams across the Council is joined up, so in essence they work as one team reducing duplication.
- Map engagement blackspots across the borough, where voluntary and community groups have not been established, and consider how we improve the way we reach residents in these areas.
- Share best practice and create new knowledge around consultation and engagement.
- Ensure engagement is informing policy and is consistent to a recognised standard.



## How will we do this?

It is important that this work informs policy through the following ways:

- By understanding what makes local people tick (perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, barriers and motivators); deeper understanding into the issues that drive community involvement, participation and self-reliance.
- Creating a consistent approach to council-wide consultation and engagement which includes common questions and shared information.
- Delivering an annual Listening and Learning resident survey delivered digitally to reduce cost; feeds into 'You said, We did' campaign.
- By running annual focus groups to gain insight on key issues.
- A Consultation Toolkit has been produced to inform how we as an organisation consult including through Asset mapping (this is a potential project with VCS as lead partner).

### Asset Mapping (potential project with VCS lead partner)

- Understanding strengths and weaknesses of community groups and how they are organised.
- Understanding online forums where people come together and engage via social media, and applying that in our Digital Communication strategy, and by engaging in conversations that are already happening rather than expecting them to come to us.

### Stakeholder mapping and engagement

- Developing and improving a centralised stakeholder database/ Customer Relationship Management (CRM) of key contacts.
- Using contact database for consultation and engagement activity.
- Regular stakeholder e-bulletins and targeted communications based on topics of interest and emerging issues.
- CRM to feed into emergency preparedness plan.

## How will we do this?

### Consultation framework (potential to tap into support to set up the framework)

- Develop a council-wide consultation framework which sets agreed standards.
- Establish consultation principles using The Gunning Principles; ensuring co-design principles are baked into activity.
- Set a standard model for how to deliver consultations.
- Set up governance to oversee activity, reduce risk, reduce duplication and ensure intelligence is shared.
- Review the resident consultation portal, making it easier for people to know what is happening and to engage.
- Common Approach to Equality and Health Impact Assessments (EqHIA).
- Common approach to resident report back on consultation activity (ensuring that the feedback loop is built into all work).

### Corporate engagement programme

- Where possible, delivery of budget engagement using participatory budgeting principles.
- Work with services to establish, promote and improve resident community forums to encourage maximum community involvement and participation.
- Work with ward councillors to set up a framework of area neighbourhood panels. This will be appropriate to the area and discuss local issues, encourage community involvement and seek community-owned solutions to local challenges.
- Biannual programme of 'The Big Conversation' to feed into corporate plan.
- Set up resident focus groups or panels.
- Create community listening events by area or subject.
- Short monthly opinion polls.



## How will we do this?

### Direct engagement

**In addition there are a number of ways we can improve how we directly engage with residents. We can create better forums and mechanisms with residents which can include:**

- Better use of online tools.
- Improve engagement with Living and other e-publications.
- Regularly tell residents the results of consultations and outcomes of engagement.
- Make sure consultations are strategic and we are getting the best outcomes we can.
- Make sure we have the voice of young people – look at further ways of engaging with this group.
- Engage more with groups with particular characteristics including the changing demography of the borough.
- Better use and review of our consultation platform Citizen Space, with all data being in one place, aiding public consultations.

**As we evolve our engagement with residents, we will look at co-production of services through the following ways:**

- Create user groups to soft test new digital applications.
- Work with young people to help form better services.
- Look at how we can better co-produce adult care services through pilots with user groups.

**Ultimately we want to empower residents to support their communities and tell us what they want to do. As a council we can do the following:**

- Encourage community action to support neighbourhoods through litter picking, grass cutting and other related action.
- Support and explore how the friends of parks groups could be used wider in other areas.
- Facilitate support for start-up community groups.





## How will we do this?

**Partnership working is another important element as we are working closely with a number of other public bodies and other organisations. We can do this by:**

- Working more closely with residents on cultural issues such as Borough of Culture applications so that residents are fully involved in these initiatives.
- Looking at pooling resources with partners such as the NHS to get better outcomes and reach more people.
- Housing, regeneration and planning is a major area of ongoing engagement with residents. This includes tenants, leaseholders and wider communities. We want to improve how we work and listen with these groups through the following ways:
  - Set up leaseholder and resident panels.
  - Deliver roadshows.
  - Make sure there is meaningful consultation and engagement on major regeneration and housing schemes including involvement of ward councillors.
  - Continue to engage and inform residents during new builds.
  - Look at how we can use our buildings better for communities to come together.
  - Make sure there is a seamless connection with regeneration schemes and work.
  - Find creative ways of engaging residents on master planning and infrastructure improvements.



## How will we do this?

Our forums and relationships with the voluntary sector are also important to building our communities and working with them. It is important that we work with them more strategically to help inform service delivery and policy as well as use them to reach different groups we would not normally talk to. This will include:

- Review how the forums run to ensure they are outcome focused.
- Look at any gaps, for example, young people, particular communities or neighbourhoods.
- Ensure funding opportunities are promoted and look at ways they can better benefit the community and the Council.
- Ensure collaboration between the Council and the voluntary and community sector to provide the services possible. Encourage voluntary and community sector organisations to work in partnership.
- Set up a new community cohesion and engagement forum to ensure we talk to residents about the issues that matter to them.
- Development of 'Team Havering' website and web pages with information on how people can get involved in their local area through participation and volunteering.
- Annual campaign to promote community involvement and volunteering.



## How will we report back?

As a council we will need to show progress on how we are engaging with residents. Taking the six principles as a guide we will set out how we have met these principles in an Annual Report to Cabinet.

This will include a number of key indicators:

- Feedback from residents and groups including the outcomes of any groups or community actions.
- The number of people attending public meetings or forums and the recording of anecdotal and qualitative feedback.
- Show how we have responded by publishing, 'You said, We did'.
- Number of residents attending events and roadshows.
- Any key collaborative work and outcomes delivered by services.
- Publicise Annual Report on consultation and engagement activities with particular emphasis on a 'You said, We did' programme.
- Listening and learning quarterly report to senior management team/private cabinet pooling intelligence from engagement/consultation and social media.

## Next steps

This strategy will evolve over time and we will work with our communities, forums, voluntary sector, partners, stakeholders, friends groups and other bodies to ensure we continue to build cohesive communities and better work and engage with them over time.

We will review and report on progress next year making sure we continue to evolve from broadly informing and engaging with our communities to a more collaborative and empowering approach.