

<p>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</p> <p>15 July 2019</p> <p>Housing Services support of resident participation and engagement</p>	<p>Item No</p> <p>5</p>
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1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report seeks to present to the Living Hackney Scrutiny Commission a description of the current work and approach to supporting engagement and participation for tenants and leaseholders. The item will include exploring the support provided to TRAs and TMOs, the value, take up and use of the Community Development Fund (CDF), and the work of Housing Services to communicate this and other funding opportunities to groups on estates.
- 1.2 Members will be given a brief overview about our planned review of structure of the service which Housing Services is planning for later in the summer. The Commission will have also opportunity to give its views on where they see potential improvements could be made.
- 1.3 The Regulator of Social Housing has set out a number of standards that Social Housing Organisations must comply with. The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard was reviewed in 2017 and is one six standards that must be complied with.
- 1.4 A full review of resident engagement was commissioned by Hackney Homes in February 2016. The main aim of the project was to; *“ensure that future resident engagement and communications meet the needs of both residents and the Council in its landlord role.”* It also took on board the regulatory requirements of the Tenant Involvement and Engagement Standard
- 1.5 The Group Director of Neighbourhoods & Housing presented a paper to the Cabinet meeting of 19th April 2017 making recommendations for changing and improving how Housing Services communicate and engage with residents living in Council homes. Recommendations were based on the issues that were identified as most important to involved residents. Residents working in the formal Resident Engagement structure were consulted and influenced the key principles and framework for the future put forward and agreed at the meeting.
- 1.6 Recommendations for *“significant improvement”* focused on key areas including;
 - **Participation Budgets:** The review recommended ending Tenant Levy funding and creating a new funding vehicle – Community Development Fund (CDF). Tenant Levy funding was previously limited to registered Tenants and Residents Association (TRAs) and was regularly underspent. The new funding vehicle required to be available to all estates and to have a wider criteria to encourage residents to apply.

The other major change involved creating a 'Resident Led Improvement Budget' (RLIB) to fund communal works improvements to estates as identified by residents.

- **Amendments to the formal Resident Engagement Structure:** The formal Resident Engagement structure was amended to reflect a change in the 'governance' arrangements that residents would be able to influence.
- **Widening Opportunities for Engaging with Tenants & Leaseholders and Communities:** The review identified residents' desire for a community development type approach to be introduced to the scope of the Resident Participation Team. This entailed working with residents on estates who have previously not engaged to introduce projects that meet the following themes:

Employment and Training / Youth and empowering young residents / Food Growing and Environmental / Digital Inclusion/ Health and Wellbeing / Community Cohesion

2. THE CURRENT RESIDENT PARTICIPATION (RP) OFFER

2.1 The Resident Participation Service sits within Tenancy & Leasehold Services in Housing Services. The focus for this team is on working in partnership with tenants and leaseholders to help bring about improved service delivery.

2.2 The Formal Resident Engagement structure includes:

- **Resident Liaison Group (RLG)** – This group became the strategic level of participation with Housing Services. RLG formalises the role of residents in monitoring the performance of Housing Services, including an agreement on what information will be provided by the Council and on what frequency. The Council assist in the recruitment of members and in 2018/19 seven new members were recruited to the RLG.
- **Resident Scrutiny Panel** – Set up in 2012 tis panel sits 'outside' of the formal Resident Engagement structure. This group of residents scrutinise performance of Housing services and carry out in depth reviews of service areas. So far the Scrutiny Panel have looked at Estate Cleaning, ASB, Voids, and are in the process of Re-cycling. Full reports are posted on the council Website with an action plan from the service head for improvement.
- **Area Neighbourhood Panels (NPs)** – There are 6 Area NPs. Changes to the functions of NPs were made in 2018 - developing common terms of reference to be used by all NPs that enshrines the principle that these should be open meetings; ensuring that papers for NPs are published online and meetings are publicised.
- **Tenants & Residents Associations (TRAs) and existing resident groups:**

TRAs are the mainstay of the formal Resident Engagement structure. In 2018/19 The RP Team have supported and worked with **93 groups** – 79

TRAs and 14 Gardening Projects/ Supported Residents' Groups (SRG). The groups have been assisted during the year to apply for funding, organising their 'Big Lunch' or Summer Events. Some groups have received support to build their capacity to promote their TRA, re-structure their meetings, and procure services such as youth activity and homework clubs. Groups that have external income have been assisted to prepare their annual accounts.

Housing Officers also support TRAs attending Enhanced TRA meetings quarterly and overseeing AGMs.

TRAs by 7 Area Neighbourhoods - Total 79

TRAs in Central Panel Area	13
TRAs in Clapton Panel Area	13
TRAs in Homerton Panel Area	20
TRAs in Shoreditch Panel Area	11
TRAs in Stamford Hill Panel Area	8
TRAs in Stoke Newington Panel Area	14

2.3 OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES:

The current work and approach to supporting engagement with tenants and leaseholders living in Council homes and estates includes;

- 2.4 **Working with Unrepresented Estates:** During 2017/2018 the RP Team visited 250 estates across the borough. Information was collected and an estate profile was developed for each estate. Data sources used included information collated from Housing Officers; ASB Team; Universal Housing, Income data and speaking with residents on walkabouts.

The information was used in 2018/19 to target 40 unrepresented estates across the borough.

- 2.5 **Regeneration and Development Estates:** The RP Team have also worked with Hackney Estate Regeneration Team to provide resident liaison work on request on the following estates:

- **Colville Estate** – Working with contractors to plan and deliver a garden project
- **Kings Crescent** – Working with old and new residents to set up a new group, and put on welcome events for new residents
- **Nightingale Estate** – Assisting the regeneration team to decant the community groups that were located on the estate and to help establish extra activities in the temporary community facility
- **Marian Court** – Working with residents to set up and sustain a community group;

- **De Beauvoir** – Providing resident liaison assistance to Regeneration Team;
 - **Gascoyne 2** – Working with stakeholders to consult residents on new community facility and to draft a sustainable business plan.
- 2.6 **Community Projects:** This year the RP team have also worked with the Public Health Team to deliver health and wellbeing projects from a number of community halls and hubs across the borough. The team have also worked with a range of small voluntary sector organisations to deliver ‘taster’ sessions to residents, which range from exercise classes, nutrition, cook and eat classes and Diabetes Health Checks.
- 2.7 **Over 55 Groups:** There are currently 13 groups that provide activities for older Hackney Residents that help combat loneliness and isolation and promote community cohesion. Each group was visited in order to complete a ‘needs analysis’. The information collected was used to form the basis of a Neighbourhood-wide forum for older people. The forum is open to all members from those over 55’s groups that are registered with the council. The Officer working with this group has arranged ‘taster’ sessions in armchair yoga, healthy eating, social trips to reduce isolation and internet training. Trowbridge Senior Citizens Group, were funded and supported to provide two training courses for silver surfers and are now successfully managing an internet café.
- 2.8 **Street Properties Forum:** The RP Team was tasked with re-launching a forum for Street Properties. To facilitate this the team carried out a mapping exercise of all street properties in the Hackney Housing Stock. Analysis of the mapping exercise, helped to identify where to focus efforts to re-launch the forum. The decision was made to have two forums each covering a geographical area. Initial meetings have been held and the forums will be supported to develop during the coming year 2019/20.
- 2.9 **Resident Training:** The RP team provides a minimum of 10 training courses per year, specifically targeted at active residents. During 2018/19 the programme included the following topics:
- Safeguarding Awareness
 - First Aid
 - Food Hygiene
 - Successful Secretarial Skills
 - Chairing Meetings
 - Book-keeping for small groups
 - Conflict and Resolution
 - Developing Community Projects
 - Making Successful Funding Applications
 - Managing a Community Hall
 - Basic Food Hygiene

In addition for individual groups, Resident Participation Support Officers have provided bespoke training in healthy cooking, setting up a small community business, and organising successful meetings.

2.10 **Digital Engagement and Inclusion:**

The RP team host a website <http://www.myhackney.org/>

This site is used to communicate with residents over the internet. The site also hosts a web page for each registered group that want to have an internet presence. The team provides training to those residents who want to manage their own page. The groups who do not want to manage their page, can send the content to RP to upload.

The team also has a twitter account which attracts 11,000 unique impressions each month and website attracts 3,500 impressions.

2.11 Community Development Fund 2018/2019:

This fund was launched in April 2018 as required by the RP Service Review. The fund consists of the Tenant Levy (£110,000 per annum) and the underspend from 'Mast Money' (£232,000 per annum). The fund will be based on the number of properties on each estate with a separate budget for street properties. Officers will set the final spending plan with priorities being determined by residents living in those properties that would benefit, During 2018/19 - 100 resident groups have applied for and received funding. The total spend 2018/19 was approximately **£95,000**.

2.12 Resident Led Improvement Budget

The same RP Review approved the establishment of a fund for estate improvements to be known as the Resident Led Improvement Budget. The fund replaced the existing Environmental Improvement Budget (EIB) and S.184 budgets and is available to all estates including those without TRAs. The fund is based on the number of properties on each estate with a separate budget for street properties. This budget and will be focused on genuine improvements to communal areas and estates. Communal repairs will continue to be carried out within the communal repairs budget. The budget for 2018/19 was £1.1 Million and all of it was spent for 2018/19. The budget for 2019/20 is the same, The Improvements and repairs are identified through estate walkabouts. Officers will then immediately raise any identified repairs and prepare two programmes:

- a Repairs Programme based on the identified repairs to include delivery dates ;
- an Improvements Programme based on the identified improvements including delivery dates.

3. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE PLANS

3.1 Following implementation of the RP Review, there are a number of improvements yet to be completed. These include;

- *New ways of working and improvements to processes and procedures*
- *A revised model staffing structure to clarify roles within the RP Team and focus on key specialisms.*

3.1 The revised staff structure aims to provide an RP Service that:

- Meets regulatory requirements and strengthens current formal resident engagement structures – promotes resident scrutiny – supports and

- empowers involved residents to achieve their potential (through training, skills audit etc.);
- Creates more opportunities to involve and engage residents living in Council homes to enable them to have greater input into service improvement across the whole of Housing Services – including utilising more communication methods to reach out to residents not currently involved;
 - Focuses on community development and social investment in estates, concentrating on those areas that most need development;
 - Increases access to services by utilising digital engagement methods and social media, (bearing in mind residents' needs and accessibility);
 - Reaches more residents living in Council homes and increases community cohesion – promoting initiatives for young residents and that tackle 'gang culture';
 - Links to wider Council initiatives / cross cutting themes to offer more opportunities for residents to participate and engage;
 - Provides for future growth – flexible and adaptable to change;
 - Is cost effective and delivers value for money.
- 3.3 The proposal seeks to ensure that the RP Team is fit for purpose for the next 3-5 years and the service delivers for the benefit of residents in an efficient, sustainable way.
- 3.4 It is our intention to consult further with residents and staff about their priorities around Resident Engagement/ Participation and Community Development. This will enable input into creation of a new strategy for how Housing Services plans to engage with tenants and leaseholders over the coming years; taking into account tenant scrutiny and the Regulator for Social Housing's Tenant Involvement & Empowerment standards and the 'voice of the tenant' in continuously improving service delivery.
- 3.5 As the staff restructure is currently subject to delegated powers report approval, it is not applicable to supply further information to the commission at this stage. However, an update will be provided to the 13 November 2019 meeting.

Report Author: *Gilbert Stowe, Head of Tenancy & Leasehold Services*

gilbert.stowe@hackney.gov.uk

020 8356 3821