

<p>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</p> <p>16 December 2019</p> <p>Housing Services support of resident participation and engagement – update from 15 July 2019 meeting</p>	<p>Item No</p> <p>6</p>
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1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report presents an update to the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission on the approach to supporting engagement and participation for tenants and leaseholders within Housing Services. It includes a response to the 11 recommendations raised by the Commission to the Cabinet Member for Housing Services in the letter of 14 August 2019.
- 1.2 An update will be given on the progress of the review of the structure of the Service and development of a new Resident Engagement Strategy for Housing Services.
- 1.3 We are not able to give final outcomes of the review to Members at this stage as the review is still ongoing. However, considerable work has been completed and will help inform residents, staff and stakeholders on the improvements needed to achieve strong and meaningful engagement with tenants and leaseholders.

2. TENANT PARTICIPATION ADVISORY SERVICE 'SMART REVIEW'

- 2.1 In August 2019 the Interim Head of Resident Participation and Communities commissioned an independent, expert body, the Tenant Participation and Advisory Service (TPAS), to carry out a 'Smart Review' exercise, which assesses how Hackney Housing Services is performing against six National Engagement Standards in terms of engagement and participation with those residents living in Council managed homes.
- 2.2 This was undertaken in two parts. A desk exercise, where various documents relating to Resident Engagement activities are supplied and measured against a self-assessment framework. Followed by a TPAS consultant meeting with staff that engage with residents, and involved residents themselves, to do a 'reality check' on findings from the desk work.
- 2.3 This exercise was completed in Sept 2019 and the good practice and recommendations made from the review can be found in *Appendix 1*.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the findings from this will be used, alongside feedback from other sources including the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission to help agree a resident consultation plan that identifies key priorities for involved (as

well as 'less involved') residents and results in a new Resident Engagement Strategy for Housing Services for the next 3 years.

- 2.5 Following the Resident Liaison Group (RLG) meeting on 14 November 2019, a working sub-group of RLG has been agreed, who will work in co-production with Housing Services Officers and the Council Senior Consultation Officer (Housing) to develop the new Strategy.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCRUTINY COMMISSION:

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Commission letter of 14 August 2019 to the Cabinet Member for Housing Services recommended;
- 3.2 ***Recommendation 1 - That the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services leads on the development of a Resident Participation Team Service Plan. That this sets out and monitors progress against a set of objectives and success measures. That the objectives and success measures are informed in part by the discussions in the July meeting (recommendations 2, 4, 6 and 10 cover the specific measures / aspects suggested by the Commission), and the wider consultation with stakeholders.***
- 3.3 As requested, the service is currently developing a new Resident Participation (RP) Service Plan which will set out key priorities and objectives in line with the improvement of engagement services across the whole of Housing Services. This Plan will, as recommended, clearly state what success measures are expected, responsibilities for delivery and realistic timescales to achieve success.
- 3.4 It is recognised that improvement is needed to the systems and processes underpinning the formal engagement functions, as well as improvements to the knowledge and skill set of those directly engaging and communicating with tenants and leaseholders on the front-line.
- 3.5 A formal restructure of the RP service is currently in progress with a planned implementation timetable of Spring 2020. Staff consultation closed on 22 November and feedback from this process is currently under consideration.
- 3.6 The TPAS review is the precursor of the new Service Plan which will be developed in conjunction with residents over the next few months as described previously. Work on the Service Plan aligns with development of the new Resident Engagement Strategy for Housing Services.
- 3.7 ***Recommendation 2 - Targeting unrepresented estates - priority given to those estates in neighbourhoods with relatively lower numbers of TRAs.***
- 3.8 Whilst Tenants & Residents Associations (TRAs) are the mainstay of local formal resident engagement, there is a need to prioritise support and empowerment of currently under-represented estates to engage with Housing Services over service improvements and delivery. In addition to the 40 under-represented estates targeted last year, the new Service Plan will set a

further target for 2020, the outcomes of which will be monitored and measured against set success criteria.

3.9 **Recommendation 3 - Numbers of registered TRAs within each Neighbourhood and also the numbers of Hackney Housing estates and units within each.**

3.10 The following table provides the total number of residents who fall within each TRAs area of influence. Estates are defined as in our management information system, with those having over 10 tenanted households selected.

Area	Number of TRAs	TRA Population	Estates
Central	13	2366	45
Clapton	13	2274	27
Homerton	19	5159	50
Shoreditch	11	1606	18
Stamford Hill	8	975	30
Stoke Newington	14	2515	44
Total	78	14895	214

3.11 **Recommendation 4 - The Service Plan for the Resident Engagement Team includes success measures around:**

- ***The scale of engagement and input by tenants and leaseholders in decision-making around RLIB spending (this might include the numbers and percentages attending walkabout sessions and the numbers engaging in online surveys)***
- ***Outcomes achieved through RLIB spending***

3.12 The Resident Led Improvement Budget (RLIB) was introduced in April 2018 in its current format and it is recognised that there is a need to develop the way in which estate improvements are identified, agreed, monitored and delivered.

3.13 As the Scrutiny Commission rightly suggests, one way of promoting this opportunity is through greater public information on the outcomes delivered from the funding being publicised to the local community. We agree with this and it will be added as a measure of success to the Service Plan.

3.14 Other measures of success within the Service Plan will include reviewing the estate walkabout in terms of publicity, times communication and inclusion. Also, making better use of other communication channels for gaining resident input into the priorities on the estate, including social media and other methods of engagement and communication.

3.15 **Recommendation 5 - We recommend that details of improvements delivered by the RLIB are made available on myhackney.org and are included in wider RLIB communications with an aim of seeking to engage more tenants and leaseholders in the process.**

3.16 The restructure of the RP team and the re-defining of staff roles and responsibilities will assist in a focus on promoting and celebrating successful co-production and co-design with residents. Housing Services is seeking to

put Council social housing residents at the heart of everything we do. Working in partnership with tenants and leaseholders to improve the estates where they live is fundamental to engaging in a meaningful way and being inclusive in decision-making at all levels of engagement.

- 3.17 We will work closely with the Council's Communications, Culture and Engagement team to ensure that improvements delivered through the RLIB are publicised as widely as possible to encourage greater engagement by tenants and leaseholders in the process.
- 3.18 ***Recommendation 6 – The Service Plan for the Resident Engagement Team includes success measures around:***
- ***Engagement in the CDF (this might include numbers of applications and the number and values of awards)***
 - ***Outcomes achieved through CDF funding***
- 3.19 The Community Development Fund (CDF) was introduced in its current format in April 2018 and it is again recognised that there is a need to encourage greater take up of this grant. It should be noted that the previous July report stated £95,000 take up in 2018/19. However this figure excluded grant money from both the 'Tenant Levy' and 'Mast Money Underspend'. The inclusive spend figure is in fact approx. **£178,000** - although this is still an underspend against the £342,000 available.
- 3.20 We appreciate the need to publicise this opportunity more widely, using all available media and actively encouraging existing TRAs and Supported Resident Groups to utilise this funding to benefit tenants and communities with as wide a range of social and cultural events and activities as possible.
- 3.21 ***Recommendation 7 - We also recommend that details of activities and events delivered through CDF funding are made available on myhackney.org and are included in wider CDF communications within an aim of seeking to engage more tenants and leaseholders in the process.***
- 3.22 Resident Participation will work closely with the Council Communications, Culture and Engagement team to ensure that projects delivered through the CDF are publicised as widely as possible to encourage greater engagement by tenants and leaseholders in the process.
- 3.23 ***Recommendation 8 - We ask that the update in December includes confirmation of Community Development Fund budgets for 2019/20.***
- 3.24 As stated above, the total CDF budget available for 19/20 is £342,000.
- 3.25 ***Recommendation 9 - We ask that consideration is given to the examples of digital engagement cited in the London Assembly Housing Committee's 'Hearing Resident voices in social housing' report. We ask for feedback on any planned use of digital platforms for engaging residents on Hackney Housing estates.***
- 3.26 The Council's digital housing strategy will be looking at tackling barriers to digital inclusion. This sits alongside the current consultation on the far reaching full-fibre proposals, which look at rolling out full-fibre to the borough

by targeting connections to social housing and there is a commitment in the RP review to explore better use of online engagement tools. The My Hackney 'getting involved page' and Hackney Matters Citizen's panel are under review as part of the TPAS work. The 'Hackney Matters' Online Citizens Panel is the Council's online communication and consultation portal – there are currently approx. 180 tenants, leaseholders and home-owners as members of the Panel - the total citizens on the Panel being around 660. In 2018/19 Members were consulted on everything from ASB, Parks, Parking, Housing issues, Public Realm, Streetscene, etc. Working with the Consultation and Engagement team, we are looking to build up the numbers of tenants & leaseholders regularly taking part in this online forum. This is a valuable resource for engagement and one that Housing Services plans to utilise more in coming years for consultations.

- 3.27 Housing Management are also exploring use of Common Place (the online engagement tool used for Dalston and Hackney Central Conversation and Shoreditch Park). The Council hopes to use this as a smart way of doing place-based engagement on estates that links to wider engagement tools. The planned restructure of the Resident Participation Team will put an emphasis on enabling the 'voice of the tenant' to be heard in all aspects of how we as a landlord deliver services to our residents, and demonstrating that social housing residents are able to influence and scrutinise strategy, policy, standards, approaches and performance targets at different levels within Housing Services. Additionally, engagement is outcome focused and is designed to improve services and communities, as well as provide value for money and transparency.
- 3.28 ***Recommendation 10 & 11 - What wider Council policies and strategies can the Resident Participation Team make key contributions to? / The Service Plan - sets out action and success measures around how these will be contributed to.***
- 3.29 The Resident Participation Team already aligns its work with a number of wider Council strategies, including work on employment, financial inclusion and public health. This was particularly evident at the recent Winter Warmer and Our Homes events where a large number of internal and external partners engaged with residents across a wide range of issues.
- 3.30 The Council pursues a "whole citizen" approach to resident engagement whereby the Housing Revenue Account funds staff within the Council's Corporate Engagement Team to, amongst other things, ensure that the voices of Council tenants and leaseholders are properly represented in consultation work. Further improving this is a priority for the future. Fundamental to this will be making better use of our engagement channels and tools (particularly digital engagement tools) to understand the views and needs of tenants regarding where they live and Council services, which allows the Council to monitor and respond rather than just impose top down corporate strategies.
- 3.31 The Service Plan will set out how the work of the Resident Participation and Communities team will increase its contribution to delivery of wider Council policies and strategies including:

- Hackney Corporate plan / Mayor's Manifesto
- Housing Strategy / Green Infrastructure Plan
- Arts and Cultural Strategy
- Older Persons' Strategy
- Fair Futures Commission / Hackney Works - Employment & Skills / Youth Parliament
- Inclusive Economy Strategy
- Recycling Initiatives
- Public Health Initiatives

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Appendix 1



TPAS SMART Improvement report summary – October 2019

Assessment against TPAS 6 National Resident Engagement Standards.

1 Engagement Strategy

Make sure your tenant engagement links directly to business plan objectives

Good Practice and recommendations:

- ❖ **Hackney Good Practice** – the commitment at Director level and from the Cabinet Member for Housing is outstanding and this is reflected by resource commitment and attendance and full participation at a recent Resident Liaison Group (RLG) away day.

Our recommendations would be:

- To set - **together with residents** /‘co-production’ - a set of SMART objectives that resident engagement will help achieve in the long, medium and short term – these should link to the Council’s corporate strategy, the Community Strategy, data from STAR surveys, the RLG Plan and the Housing Services Plan, and reviewed annually. This will help give Hackney’s Resident Involvement some focus and help reduce the reactive nature of current involvement. This should be around a Resident Involvement Strategy (for Housing), which clearly explains how involvement will work in the Borough with a simple document/web page for every resident to see.
- Set out in this new approach how you will measure the changes as a result of delivering each objective. You need to evidence planned and unplanned changes. Ensure that you measure more than just the numbers involved; Gathering increased evidence and reporting more regularly the impacts to stakeholders, staff and residents will create an ongoing legacy of reassurance.
- Communicate to all residents (not just the involved resident Reps), your plans and involve them in your journey - be open to feedback from residents on how they can help you achieve your vision.
- Ensure that a Building Safety Engagement Strategy and action plan are either drawn up alongside the strategy above, or as part of it in line with current expected regulation following recent national consultation. Ensure residents are part of this process, possibly through a focus group/task and finish approach.
- The strategy should reflect on residents’ views that more meaningful involvement around decision-making and co-production should be developed. This could include a transparent process to involve residents in Housing Services procurement and staff recruitment.

2 Resources for Engagement

Your engagement has got to be resourced to ensure it is effective in delivering planned outcomes

Good Practice and recommendations:

- ❖ **Hackney Good Practice – The Resident Led Improvement Budget (RLIB)** introduced in April 2018 which focuses on genuine physical improvements to communal areas and estates allows genuine resident led decision-making in spending on improvements. Knowledge of the fund is excellent by all stakeholders and at every level and all agreed positive benefits. Examples were well known.

Our recommendations would be:

- Once a strategy, action plan and measurement methodology is agreed with residents, only then can a cost benefit analysis be carried out. I recommend an annual impact assessment is undertaken on each objective (rather than method or Forum), to assess value for money. This should be presented to the RLG and communicated across the Housing Services department.
- Regular budget updates including benchmarking, should form part of the RLG agenda or be devolved to a sub group to increase transparency – this should be shared on MyHackney and in the Tenants Annual Report. These can also be extended to Neighbourhood Panels either as Panel specific budgets, or all involvement, or both.
- The new Resident Involvement Strategy should detail any approach to resident and staff training around engagement and this is an area which needs developing. Property staff need training around customer service, which includes having specific job related conversations with all residents as well as basic involvement skills. Front-line staff could be better utilised to promote involvement options for residents.
- Consider extending staff recognition (certificates) for Good Practice in involvement for non Resident Participation (RP) team staff
- Resident training should start with a training needs analysis of involved residents and the shaping of an annual programme which includes a mixture of internal/external and joint training, (both with other housing organisations and staff/resident mix)
- Publicise annual training more widely as a recruitment mechanism (including recruitment of younger involved residents)
- Consider a small returnable deposit to residents on booking to ensure good attendance
- Consider access for residents to staff training places

- Consider involved residents leading or co-delivery of training such as around the Growing project
- Consider making some training compulsory in return for a grant– groups in charge of large sums of money should undertake training and nobody should be eligible to take the post of Chair without first attending Chair training. They can then be trained to lead or co-produce. Chair training to likely successors (all consolidated in a succession plan)
- Plan networking opportunities for residents and staff – this can include attending free and fee based events, training and conferences (possibly together), as well as inviting nearby social landlords to come and share examples and good practice to all residents meetings.

3 Information and Insight

Utilising the information effectively; Provide access to information at the right level, at the right time, to the right people in the right way

Good Practice and recommendations:

- ❖ **Hackney Good Practice** – *MyHackney* is a good platform for sharing information with residents, but under-used and the Council ‘Hackney Matters’ is a useful consultation tool for all residents – both are a springboard to further develop below.

Our recommendations would be:

- To arrange for a set of guidelines to be drawn up between the Corporate Consultation and the RP Team drawing together different approaches and shared opportunities, (sharing profiling information within GDPR) and learning from consultations and this should be followed up by regular joint meetings to promote greater collaboration
- Share quarterly performance information with Neighbourhood Panels in a meaningful way to drive service improvements
- A future Senior Management away day could focus on the use of data within each service area to improve performance and to improve knowledge outside of each service. This could bring in how residents use data within the RLG and the Resident Scrutiny Group. This could empower RLG/Scrutiny Chairs to discuss their role more.
- The new RI Strategy should set an approach to digital engagement in line with the Council’s Channel Shift Strategy and incorporated into an engagement communication plan worked with relevant officers (Engagement and Communications), to enable social media to be

planned and fed into by Officers. The Council could consider devolving RP social media to the RP team, assuming suitably qualified staff were in place to administer this.

- In addition to the suggestions for outward looking in training as above, resident groups should be encouraged to investigate Best practice – this could be shared by Officers on MyHackney or in a bi-annual briefing, external speakers should be invited to the RLG, any resident events and to Neighbourhood Panels or Tenants & Residents Associations (TRAs).
- Undertake research into why tenants and leaseholders are slow to take up digital engagement and promote usage across all residents and set up a ‘Residents Digital Communications Group’ to shape digital consultations, MyHackney and feed into the newsletter.
- Spend time further developing MyHackney to be an integral part of Resident Scrutiny and Neighbourhood Matters to prevent it being separate to the RP plan
- Consider producing a quarterly briefing to involved residents in hard copy and on MyHackney to feedback the results of involvement and to enable different groups more information.

4 Influence and Scrutiny

Ensure, tenants, leaseholders and communities can influence and scrutinise appropriately

Good Practice and recommendations:

- ❖ **Hackney Good Practice** – The video and article promoting Tenant Management in the Borough is accessible and promotes this option well. <http://hackneylearning.uk/tmo/HackneyTMOs.mp4>
- ❖ The tracking of TRA outcomes from meetings, showing improvements in communication and response is very good. Lastly, the appointment of ‘Champion Senior Managers’ to oversee the Neighbourhood Panels is a useful pro-active commitment.

We would recommend:

- All stakeholders feel that resident scrutiny is not currently working well enough and the Council needs to improve. There needs to be a Senior Management ‘Champion’ for the Resident Scrutiny Panel and the Director of Housing should meet the Panel and reassure them that things will improve moving forward. Clearly, the Panel reporting directly to the RLG is not working and I suggest that this is reviewed to include HSMT in the reporting line. The RLG and HSMT need to monitor the implementation of previous recommendations to ensure

that recommendations that are accepted by Service leads are then implemented and resulting improvements and efficiencies reported back to the Scrutiny Panel, the RLG and more widely, (should be included in the communications plan as above).

- Ensure there is consistent buy in from other services in Housing such as Asset Management, Repairs and Leasehold Services – negotiate service levels within the new strategy and consider agreements to guarantee these
- Provide workshops on the aims of the strategy to service teams outlining their roles and what is expected of them
- Pilot an online platform for leaseholders to increase communication, engagement and reduce high dissatisfaction levels
- Assist formal groups (particularly Panels) to set annual forward plans and focus on key outcomes, (flexible to allow some change) that feed into an overarching action plan for RP that focuses on improvement across all service areas.
- Consider introducing an annual “Lessons learnt” item from complaints to the RLG
- Consider capturing the level of support needed by TRAs in different stages and providing a service standard, in partnership with residents.

5 Community Engagement

Engage with communities and local stakeholders to develop projects and plans to meet jointly identified needs

Good Practice and recommendations:

- ❖ **Hackney Good Practice** – Bottom up – resident led projects are well supported from the examples given to the TRA led activities and Community Development Fund (CDF).
The Growing / Grow your own projects seems to have met outcomes within the Community Strategy such as reducing isolation, engaging with diverse groups etc.

We would recommend:

- Any new RI Strategy needs to link in with community development activities and projects both outside and within the Council Corporate teams and with outside agencies. The strategy should explain what projects would fit the Council’s priorities and what residents can expect as an ‘offer’.

- Evidence of community activities being planned based on need is required – consultation – outcomes.
- It will be difficult to integrate young people within current structures which are traditional and geared towards older residents – draw up a diversity action plan, alongside the new strategy, to ensure a planned approach to diversity, which includes current corporate approaches, other services such as Repairs, Asset Management, Regeneration etc. on gaining views outside of formal structures.
- Train Involved residents in diversity and inclusion - young people and any innovative ways to include their views in formal engagement.
- Ensure the diversity plan includes arrangements for monitoring of larger involvement activities.

6 Valuing engagement

Ensure your tenant engagement outcomes will benefit stakeholder organisations, tenants, leaseholders and communities

Good Practice and recommendations:

- ❖ **Hackney Good Practice – Devising ‘Enhanced TRA’ (ETRA) monitoring has clearly raised response times to residents and will help build trust – it does need more publicising though.**

Our recommendations would be:

- Once the strategy sets out what you want to achieve and sets involvement objectives across the department and corporately, devise a process which monitors and measures the impact of involvement
- The process should also include resident evidence
- This should be put into an annual impact report and shared with residents
- Feedback, promotion and celebration should be part of an annual communication plan which sits alongside the strategy as detailed above. I would suggest an resident awards event to reward, celebrate and publicise Good Practice from resident led community activities. It should also cover spreading the success stories of involvement around the Council – perhaps a poster campaign in offices, bathrooms and in meeting places, as well as use of the intranet.



- Consider greater publicity of the RLIB to all residents including this within the involvement communication plan and include opportunities for residents to input on social media.
- Improve website on involvement - include stories around successful RLIB/Community Development Fund (CDF) achievements including pictures etc.
- Consider greater use of MyHackney.com and increased use of design and colour – feeding back success, details of RLIB bids and CDF Bids - offer other formats on request.
- Co-produce annual reports regularly with residents – include achievements but also honest appraisals of what has not been achieved and why.