

**REPORT TO LIVING IN HACKNEY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 DECEMBER 2023**

**PROGRESS ON RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (RES)
ACTION PLAN**

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report looks at progress made against the strategic priorities identified in the Housing Services Resident Engagement Strategy (RES) since it was adopted by Cabinet in December 2022 and our plans to further strengthen engagement. The five priorities are as follows:
1. Embed a 'Resident First' culture across the service
 2. Support our involved residents' groups to thrive
 3. Widen the ways residents can engage with us
 4. Ensure that residents influence our decision-making and drive service improvement
 5. To promote engagement activity that strengthens our communities.
- 1.2 It also updates the Committee on the relationship between the strategy and our preparations for the introduction of the Government's social housing regulatory framework. This places a strong emphasis on resident engagement across the four proposed consumer standards, and will be a key focus for the Social Housing Regulator when assessing housing services performance.

2. BACKGROUND

Development of the Resident Engagement Strategy

- 2.1 The RES for Housing Services was approved by Cabinet in December 2022. The Strategy was co-produced with residents, with its development overseen by a Project Champions Group, made up of the Resident Liaison Group (RLG) Co Chairs and the Cabinet Member for Housing Services and Resident Participation, alongside a wider Strategy Scrutiny Group bringing together officers and involved and uninvolved residents.
- 2.2 Final proposals in RES were informed by wider feedback from housing residents and staff, including focus groups, major surveys, and outreach to residents via local community and faith groups. This meant that we gathered some statistically reliable information alongside detailed comments and discussion notes which provided more in-depth insight into residents' concerns and views. This provided confidence that the direction outlined in the final document was a fair representation of the issues and challenges residents faced, and their priorities for improvement.

- 2.3 The strongest message from the RES consultation was a need to get the basics right, with a stronger focus on timely, transparent and honest communication. It was also clear that residents' experience of our services informs their views of how well we engage - and poor experience can undermine trust and confidence. This underlined the need for the strategy to be owned across the service, with engagement understood as the responsibility of all housing leaders, managers and staff.

Relationship with new Housing Regulatory Framework

- 2.4 Since the adoption of the RES, the Social Housing Regulator has published its proposals for the new social housing regulatory framework, with four consumer standards and a related code of practice issued for consultation in July 2023. The proposed four new standards are: safety and quality; neighbourhood and community; tenancy; and transparency, influence and accountability.
- 2.5 The standard on transparency, influence and accountability mirrors the focus of the RES, with its key themes covering engagement with tenants, fairness and respect, complaints, diverse needs and performance information. However, there is strong expectation that good resident engagement will be central to the delivery of each standard with the guidance highlighting the need to ensure that tenants have meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise landlord's strategies, policies and services.
- 2.6 Arrangements to ensure delivery against this framework have now been established by Housing Services, with workstreams for each consumer standard, led by relevant Assistant Directors. Progress on each workstream is reported monthly to an Implementation Board, chaired by the Strategic Director of Housing Services, with the Board reviewing where further action is required to keep work on track. Project resources within the Housing Transformation Team have now been strengthened to support this process and, as key projects and policy development is taken forward, resident involvement will be crucial.
- 2.7. Alongside the work of the Regulator, work undertaken by the Housing Ombudsman is also feeding into these processes. The Ombudsman has published 3 Spotlight Reports on Damp and Mould, Knowledge & Information Management and Noise, offering detailed insight into common areas of service failure and maladministration across social housing providers. A fourth spotlight report on 'Vulnerabilities' is expected in the new year. These documents offer rich insight into resident experiences of dealing with their landlord and work is underway to embed the recommendations made into practice.

3. PROGRESS ON RES PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The RES has five strategic priorities, linked to 42 actions. These set out an ambitious programme of work to be delivered over three years, with work prioritised to reflect service capacity. Pressures on the wider service, including a need to tackle areas which are of critical concern to residents, such as the repairs backlog, an improved approach to the management of damp and mould and leaks, and resolution of high priority rehousing cases, inevitably means that progress in some areas has not been as fast as we would like. A lack of capacity within the

housing transformation service has also limited progress in some areas, with a comprehensive review of the complaints procedure only just starting. Nonetheless, the summary below demonstrates some significant areas of progress, as well as some work that will be taken forward next year to further embed our approach and ensure that all RES actions are delivered by December 2025.

- 3.2 The Resident Engagement Strategy Action Plan offers a more detailed operational plan, setting out key milestones and how we will monitor impact (see extract at **Appendix 2**).

Strategic Priority 1: Embed a 'Resident First' culture across the service

- 3.3 This priority focuses on actions to ensure that the service culture, and behaviour of staff, puts the residents' voice at the centre of our work, with policies, service delivery and priorities shaped by active listening and engagement. To support this we have this year:

- Worked with involved residents to agree on a set of **Housing Service service standards** which matter to them. This has resulted in a suite of 21 indicators which reflect a focus on getting the basics right:
 - Friendly, polite & treat you with respect
 - Keep you safe and secure
 - Easy to do business with
 - Keep our promises

We are currently working to increase the profile and ownership of the standards with staff before they are published to all residents. As part of our work to tackle damp and mould in our homes more effectively, we have also committed to inspecting all reports of damp and mould in five working days and responding to reported leaks within 24 hours. Recent performance data shows that we are making good progress in meeting these targets: in September 2023, surveys for damp and mould were undertaken in an average of 4.66 days and 87% of leaks were responded to within 24 hours. Work is also underway to look at whether damp and mould can be proactively tackled via the development of a predictive tool which draws data from a range of sources to highlight properties at risk. This will also include consideration of whether and how damp and mould casework should be prioritised, taking into account severity and the specific needs of residents affected.

- Continued to ensure **strong engagement between our leadership and the involved resident structure**, with the Strategic Director of Housing Services, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service regularly attending meetings of the resident liaison group (RLG) and neighbourhood panels. The former Mayor and Chief Executive also attended an RLG meeting in the last 12 months to report back on issues of concern /interests identified by RLG members. As the highest form of resident engagement, RLG routinely receives reports on any significant changes to housing policy and service delivery arrangements, and related performance and budget issues.
- Supported effective relationships with Hackney's nine **tenant management organisations**, with six-weekly meetings of the TMO Forum providing

opportunities for TMO Chairs and senior managers to discuss housing service and policy developments that affect them, and raise concerns with senior managers. Operationally, we have also been working closely with all TMOs to review current financial allowances, ensuring that arrangements are fair and transparent.

- Introduced new requirements for all **reports to the housing services management team to include details of the impact of new proposals on residents**, and how residents were engaged in shaping new policies and procedures (i.e. was the approach to engagement to inform, consult, involve, collaborate or co-design, and why). This augments the requirement to conduct Equality Impact Assessments of all new policies, proposals and decisions that affect residents.
- Ensured **effective communication of key housing messages** and service developments to the wider resident base. This has included communication campaigns to explain our approach to areas of significant resident concern such as damp and mould (*see Case Study 1 on our work on tackling damp and mould in Appendix 1*) and how we will deliver major works, such as our energy efficiency and front door replacement programmes. We have also provided regular updates on housing issues and initiatives through Love Hackney, leaflets, the internet and social media and introduced quarterly estate posters which are displayed around the borough including details of how we perform against our key targets, as well as other borough-wide and local information.
- Produced a **new communications guide for housing staff**, including top tips to avoid jargon, write clearly, and make best use of social media. This is currently being finalised and will be sent to all housing staff, supported by training.

3.4 In the next year, we will be looking to support delivery of this priority through several important pieces of work:

3.5 **Workforce Development Plan** - the RES recognised that staff having the right skills, being empowered to take decisions at the right level, and being accountable, are key to good service delivery. To support this, we will be developing a workforce development plan for Housing Services which will identify the skills and behaviours which need to be embedded in different roles across the service, with job descriptions and staff performance frameworks updated to reflect these. A new staff skills and training needs audit, staff training plan and updated staff induction packs will support this work. Resident expectations around the responsiveness of staff and need for greater role clarity, and the need to build common capability in engagement, co-production and co-design across the service, will underpin this plan.

3.6 **Improving communication** - over the past year, there has been improvements in responding to calls, with the Repairs and Neighbourhood Contact Centres now answering over 90 percent of calls and average waiting time falling below 2 minutes. However, we know there is more to do to ensure that all our call back targets are met and that correspondence meet quality standards i.e. so it is timely, clear and empathetic to each residents' needs and circumstances. To address this

we are currently introducing a new programme to quality check a sample of correspondence, complaints and telephone enquiries across all services each month. This is being supported by wider work to introduce a new workflow system that will provide comprehensive end to end resident data, linked to the development of the new ICT system. This will give us a better understanding of where problems and blockages arise.

- 3.7 **Vulnerable Residents Policy** - the RES recognised that too many housing residents experience financial hardship, social isolation and poor mental health. As access to housing becomes more restricted, we are also housing more tenants, with complex vulnerabilities that can pose risks to themselves and others. To address this, we will be developing a new policy to underpin our approach to supporting vulnerable households. This will set out how we will flex our service offer for residents who have additional needs and who are at risk of experiencing disadvantages in accessing our services and inequality in outcomes once they do. The policy will set out the common 'categories' of vulnerability / disadvantage residents often experience and then make suggestions for reasonable adjustments we will apply in these circumstances. This will inform wider work to improve data collection around protected characteristics and 'vulnerabilities' and will be an important driver for the collection of requirements for our IT design and procurement work.
- 3.8 As part of this work, we will also be reviewing our approach to resident sustainment within the service to ensure we have the capacity and skills to implement the new policy effectively (*see Case Study 2 on our current financial inclusion work to support tenancy sustainment in Appendix 1*).
- 3.9 **Residents' Charters** - to complement the service standards, we will be publishing our Repairs Charter setting out our service standards in this area, including timescale for responding to and completing repairs, what residents can expect when a repairs operative visits their home, and what we expect from residents. We will be seeking feedback from residents to finalise this, along with a separate Leasehold Charter.

Strategic Priority 2: Support our involved residents' groups to thrive

- 3.10 This priority focuses on our work to support tenants and residents' groups to be as effective as possible and to work in ways that support our engagement principles. This year our focus has been on developing the tools and support to better promote the creation and sustainment of TRAs. To support this, we have:
- Developed a new **guide to resident engagement** which sets out a range of information and guidance on: setting up and running a TRA, including templates and policies that can be used and adapted by new groups; the support offered by the resident participation team; information on more informal types of engagement; and advice on setting up and funding community projects. To make sure the guide is accessible and adds value, a task and finish group including involved residents and resident participation staff worked together to review key sections of the guide, helping to build ownership and consensus around its content. The guide is currently being designed and will be published online by the end of this year.

- Worked with involved residents to develop **a new model constitution for TRAs** and a **refreshed code of conduct**. These documents are of special importance as they set out a number of requirements which will become mandatory for TRAs who want to be registered with Housing Services. They will also make it easier for residents to understand how their TRA conducts its business and makes decisions and help us to identify those TRAs who need support from resident participation to be sustainable - for example if a group is not holding at least three open meetings per year, or struggling to hold quorate AGMs. We will be consulting all TRAs on these new model documents in the new year.
- Designed and published a new **Resident Training Programme**, based on feedback from TRAs. The new programme is designed to support both new and existing involved residents, with sessions on running a successful TRA, chairing meetings, taking minutes and dealing with finance. It also includes more specialist courses, for example, on setting up and running community gardens, developing youth projects, food hygiene, and safeguarding. Training opportunities offered by Adult Education Services have also been promoted in our publicity for this programme. The programme will be promoted all in person events, the winter warmer and TRA events, and via an article in the Love Hackney magazine, with courses running from January 2024.
- Continued to actively support the development of **new Tenants' and Residents' Associations**, with four new groups established since April 2023 (following the establishment of six new groups in 2022/23), and five more in development. The development of TRAs is often a lengthy process, with resident participation and other housing staff providing considerable support to help groups put good governance arrangements in place and engage residents via community projects and estate-based events (*see Case Study 3 in Appendix 1 on setting up Kingsgate TRA*). Related work on the resident engagement guide and model constitution will also provide more guidance to groups on promoting inclusivity.
- Worked with our existing TRAs to identify their support needs, and how these can be met. So far, 25 TRAs have completed a TRA self-assessment to identify how well they feel they are working and any support they need, and we are aiming to ensure these are completed by all TRAs by the end of March 2024. Follow-up work from the self assessment has included 1-2-1 support for new TRA officers, estate community days to build interest and participation in TRAs, and helped to shape our training programme.
- **Supported the Resident Liaison Group** to recruit new independent members, with seven residents appointed following two rounds of open recruitment. Independent members bring new skills and lived experiences to the group, helping to widen discussion and bring different perspectives (though residents nominated through the involved structure of TRAs and neighbourhood panels remain in the majority).

3.11 In the year ahead, we will be looking to support delivery of this priority further through the following work:

- 3.12 **Increased promotion of the benefits of TRAs** - while some new TRAs have developed since 2022, the number of active groups remains below pre-pandemic levels, with only 55 currently registered with us. To address this, we will continue to work at grassroots level to support new and emerging groups and to run activities on unrepresented estates (as this often promotes more interest in formal involvement). We will also be doing more active work to promote the benefits of TRAs - and our new guide to resident engagement - through different media channels, including articles in Love Hackney, social media posts, blogs, surgeries and community roadshows.
- 3.13 **Ensuring more effective follow up on issues raised by TRAs** - all registered TRAs can hold quarterly meetings with their housing officers (ETRA meetings) to flag areas of concern, but follow up on matters raised remains inconsistent. A new online ETRA monitoring tool has recently been developed to better track performance on the actions arising from these meetings and this is now being rolled out to Housing Officers. So far, 100 actions have been listed on the dashboard from 34 meetings, with 82 having updates. We will be working to embed this way of working over the next few months, and developing a more accessible version of the tool so that TRAs can monitor follow-up from their meetings in real time.
- 3.14 **Strengthening neighbourhood panels** - within the involved structure, our six neighbourhood panels provide a forum to bring together TRAs within a housing management area, share experiences, and consider common areas of concern. They also provide an important space for TRAs to collectively consider housing policy and performance, and make suggestions for improvement. At present, four of the six panels are meeting regularly, but two have struggled to re-engage TRAs since the pandemic, and overall attendance at all panels remains low (though they are open to all residents). To address this, we will be revisiting recommendations made following a review undertaken with some of the Panel Chairs in 2021/22, including proposals to review the terms of reference, widen participation, and improve promotion of the meetings.

Strategic Priority 3: Widen the ways residents can engage with us

- 3.15 This priority focuses on widening the range of engagement options, with opportunities tailored to the different needs, lifestyles and interests of Hackney's diverse communities. It recognises that one size does not fit all, and that we need to make best use of digital tools, with many residents now keen to communicate with us in this way. To support this we have this year:
- Rolled out our approach to **housing estate surgeries** with 225 estate-based surgeries held between April - October 2023. While the model aims to give residents opportunities to raise concerns with their housing officer face-to-face, an initial pilot found that there was low footfall at sessions held in community halls. As a result, in addition to estate surgeries being delivered from local community halls, the approach has evolved to deliver surgeries in partnership with voluntary and community groups, and in our libraries. Opportunities to co-locate in GPs surgeries are also being developed, helping us to work more collaboratively with health colleagues and support healthy placemaking (**see**

Case Study 4 on our developing approach to estate surgeries In Appendix One).

- Extended opportunities for residents to **contact us online** to make bookings and appointments. Repairs online was launched in April 2023 and lets residents book non-urgent repairs for their home and pick an appointment time that suits them. So far it has been used to book over 1,700 repairs by 1,000 tenants. Tenants can also upload pictures so that repairs staff can better understand the repair issue. We have recently also launched an **online booking system for surgeries**, allowing residents to book a slot with their housing officer in advance, and continue to provide opportunities for residents to provide opinions and feedback via Hackney Matters, with 289 tenants now signed up to take part in a range of housing and wider Council consultations.
- Created new opportunities for residents involved in our 50+ community gardens, to come together to share experiences and network. An online **Gardener's Network** brings together resident gardeners, CVS gardening groups and national organisations to share best learning and showcase local spaces online, and a sub-group has been working in co-production with the RP team to develop new policies for community gardens, including constitutions, management and plot-holder agreements. **Garden walks** in different neighbourhoods are also providing opportunities for residents to visit each other's spaces and share ideas, with walks held in the Shoreditch and London Fields neighbourhoods attracting over 70 residents / gardeners. Housing Officers have also been encouraged to get involved with gardening groups as a more informal way of building relationships with residents
- Recruited to a new **Housing Services Youth Forum**, with 13 young people who live in our homes now signed up. The Forum will provide a platform for young people to have a say about housing services, influence how we engage with young people, and support wider succession planning in the involved structure. So far the young people have trained as project inspectors and are working towards a formal launch of the forum in February 2024. In the longer-term we will be looking to involve the forum in other areas of our work, including the commissioning of our RP youth projects and wider resident scrutiny activity.
- Continued to deliver **annual estate walkabouts** on our estates to identify priorities for the resident estate improvement fund (REIF), with opportunities for residents to make further suggestions online.

3.16 In the year ahead, we will be looking to support delivery of this priority further through the following work:

3.17 **Improving information on the profile /characteristics of housing residents** - work to widen participation, and to tailor our services appropriately, needs to be underpinned by better information on 'the people who live behind the door', with both the Social Housing Regulator and Ombudsman also identifying this as a key requirement for all housing providers. While the new IT system is being procured, we are developing an approach to collect data on protected characteristics and vulnerabilities through our ASB deep dive and damp and mould work and will be using learning from this exercise to develop our longer-term approach. Linked to

this, we will also be taking work forward to identify the profile of TRA officers and better understand which groups (and tenures) may be under-represented at this level in our involved structures.

- 3.18 **Develop engagement opportunities that promote inclusivity and support the Council's wider equalities and anti-racist work** - during the RES strategy development, we reached out to a range of seldom heard housing residents to better understand their views and concerns via local VCS groups, and included a proposal to do this on an ongoing basis via a 'community connectors' scheme. While this remains an option, we want to revisit this to see if it is the most effective model to adopt, and work more closely with policy and strategy colleagues and external stakeholders to look at a range of engagement options to promote inclusivity, for example, via housing forums for Black and other global majority residents, LBGTQIA+ communities, and different religious and faith groups.
- 3.19 **Introduce housing services webinars** - a webinar run by Stamford Hill Neighbourhood Panel in partnership with the Resident Participation Team demonstrated that this was a good way to engage a wider group of residents, with 57 attending the session. We are currently working up proposals to test this approach more widely as another way to update residents on housing news and developments and increase the visibility of senior housing staff.

Strategic Priority 4: Ensure that residents influence our decision-making and drive service improvement

- 3.20 This priority focuses on how we will work with residents so they can influence our decision-making and ensure that proposals for improvement reflect their priorities and concerns. To support this we have this year:
- Put a strong focus on **getting residents' views through surveys and consultation exercises**. This has included two surveys of all housing tenants and residents (STAR surveys), which help us to track residents perceptions of different aspects of our service over time, with results feeding through to our service planning. This has been supplemented by major consultations on housing residents' spending priorities, which received over 1,000 responses, and our approach to the delivery of housing surgeries. Budgets for 24 / 25 are being set currently and it is hoped that this will be without significant reductions to frontline services. However, savings of £11m will need to be found from the HRA over the next four years. The spending priorities consultation feedback will be one element informing that process alongside other factors such as the need to deliver certain statutory levels of service, and maintain our performance in key areas, such as income collection.
 - **Developed a new framework for resident scrutiny**. Under the new policy, we plan to set up a Resident Scrutiny Panel comprising up to 12 residents who are not currently involved. The Panel will undertake 2 scrutiny reviews per year, with recommendations for improvement presented to, and monitored, by both the Panel and Housing Services Management Team. Resident scrutiny will provide an important opportunity for residents not currently involved to ask the us questions based on clear information and data, following an evidence-based approach:

- Why is a service delivered at all, or in a particular way?
- Why are particular timescales or procedures in place?
- Does the service reflect residents' needs and priorities?
- How much is the service costing - and can we reduce costs while still providing a good level of service?
- What is the scope to do things better or differently - and what can we learn from what others are doing?

The new approach to scrutiny will be presented to RLG for final sign off at their November 2023 meeting, with the recruitment and training of Panel members taking place in the last quarter of 2023/24.

- Developed a **new performance dashboard** which will be presented to each RLG meeting and is providing more opportunities for the group to hold management to account and challenge any under-performance. The group also receives presentations on the housing revenue account budget, allowing them to give feedback on proposals for savings and the allocation of our resources. More general information about our performance and the achievements of the resident liaison group is shared with all residents via the Residents' Annual report 2022/23.

3.21 In the year ahead, we will be looking to support delivery of this priority further through the following work:

3.22 **Resident involvement in consumer standards** - our work on the new consumer standards will provide new opportunities to engage residents in the development of new policies and procedures, either as co-opted members of project groups, via focus groups, or through wider consultation exercises. For example, work on the neighbourhood and community standard will include a 'deep-dive' review of our policies and procedures on anti-social behaviour, with feedback from affected residents used to identify the main areas of concern, map the customer journey, and shape future feedback mechanisms.

3.23 **Resident involvement in procurement** - over the next 12 months we will be involving residents in major procurement exercises for a new housing IT system, and our major works contracts. This may include involvement in work to define the specifications for new arrangements, as well as evaluating any specific resident engagement questions during the contract evaluation phase and helping to shape the new tenants' portal showing details of our major works programmes.

3.24 **Good Neighbourhood Management Policy** - the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight on Noise - Time to Be Heard report sets out 32 recommendations for landlords to improve their response to managing noise. This includes developing a standalone Good Neighbourhood Management Policy with a clear triaging process and suite of options for maintaining good neighbourhood relations. The policy, which is being developed at the time of writing, will provide a framework for how the council intends to keep our estates clean, safe and secure. It will use learning from ASB-related customer complaints and casework, including analysis of the top 20 noise cases currently open to our ASB team and reports from the cleaning team on prevalence of issues such as fly tipping, drug paraphernalia and urination in lifts etc. As part of this, staff are holding focussed conversations with residents directly affected by these issues to better understand their experiences. The policy

will set out the responsibilities of both residents and council staff, as well as the role of wider partners such as police and the voluntary and community sector and it is hoped, will act as a springboard for improving locality working on our estates and in communities.

3.25 **Improving our approach to complaints handling** - analysis of our performance for 2023/24 to date shows that we are responding to complaints more quickly and that the number we receive is starting to fall. However, with around 177 complaints still received each month, we know there is more to do to improve our performance. To address this, we have now started a root and branch review of our approach to complaints handling, including work to strengthen our learning from complaints and to identify the underlying factors which lead to complaints e.g as delays in resolving damp and mould cases often relate to surveying inspection stage, so we will be reviewing the customer journey in this area. The Housing Ombudsman has identified poor record keeping as a key factor driving poor performance and complaints and our ongoing work to deliver the response to the Housing Ombudsman's Knowledge and Information Spotlight report is critical here.

Strategic Priority 5: Promote engagement activity that strengthens our communities

3.26 This priority focuses on the work to promote the integration and resilience of our housing communities and build partnerships with others services and the third sector to develop projects that deliver community benefits. To support this, this year we have:

- Agreed a **new framework for youth engagement** with RLG, with three elements: development of the Housing Youth Forum (see priority 3), supporting TRAs and VCS to deliver on our estates and make more use of community halls; and a commissioned annual programme of youth projects across the six housing neighbourhoods. £60k has now been allocated to fund our directly commissioned work, with priorities shaped by feedback from young people, TRAs and other key stakeholders, including Young Hackney, the Gangs Unit and ASB Service. Projects have been commissioned from a range of VCS organisations, including Universal Board Games, Blue Hut and Salaam Peace, Immediate Theatre and Access to Sports. So far, over 300 children and young people have engaged in our estate-based activities (*see Case Studies 5 / 6 on the Box Up Youth Project and examples of our commissioned youth work in Appendix 1*).
- Allocated 100 per cent of the **Community Development Fund** in 2022/23 to support TRA and other resident-led projects and initiatives, with all funding applications processed within six weeks. Funding has supported trips and outings for families and young people, community lunches and fundays, Jubilee and Coronation Big Lunch parties, mural painting and film-making projects, all of which have helped to bring residents together and promote more cohesive communities. We are on track to fully spend the budget again in 2023/24.
- Continued to support over 50 community gardens and grow projects across our estates, with **13 new projects** taken forward in 2023, including those on Pond Farm, Nightingale Estate, Landfield Estate, Wick Village, and Sandford

Court and St Andrews Mews (*see Case Study 7 on the development of the Sandford Court and St Andrews Mews new community garden in Appendix 1*). Increasingly we use the garden projects to engage more young people and help people to grow food and eat healthily, with wider support from corporate volunteers and voluntary organisations such as Seeds for Growth and Groundwork. We have also supported groups to secure additional funding and support, with £43k secured for the Chart Street garden in Hoxton.

- Developed initiatives to **support residents during the cost of living crisis**. This included awarding grant funding of £40k to 14 VCS community partners to extend their provision to offer warm spaces during the winter months, and producing the cost of living booklet, with information on money and debt, free food and activities in the borough, and jobs and training support. We have also provided funding to support two estate-based food projects that support many housing residents (Idia's Kitchen at Fellows Ct and Connecting Communities at Bannister Court).
- Promoted more use of community halls by funding **health and well-being projects** with exercise classes delivered at Gascoyne 2, Kings Crescent, Geffrye, Yorkshire Grove, Fellows and Provost community halls. We also ran **three digital skills courses** at Provost, Regent's Pensioner Hall and Trelawney Hall to help housing residents, especially older residents, gain confidence in using computers and going online. Where halls are under-utilised we increasingly look to offer leases or long-term lets, with any opportunities for sole use openly advertised. For example, Children with Voices, a Hackney VCS organisation supporting children and families across the borough, were awarded a five-year lease for Fawcett Hall in December 2022.
- Supported delivery of a project for **young people with special educational needs over 25**. The project, run by Immediate Theatre, has included specialist input to discuss issues around disability and hate crimes, and used drama and script-writing sessions to explore social and health issues. Immediate Theatre also provided 15 free tickets to Birds and the Bees, a performance about sexual health education presented by Theatre Centre at the Hackney Empire. We funded lunches over the course of the project, and provided space at Nisbet Community Hall for the sessions.

3.27 In the year ahead, we will be looking to support delivery of this priority further through the following work:

3.28 **Strengthening our project evaluation framework** - we have made some progress in evaluating the impact and outcomes from our investment in community projects, with a formal evaluation completed for the warm spaces grant programme and service level agreements used to underpin our commissioned youth projects. However, there is more work to do to ensure that evaluation of all projects happens systematically and we are currently exploring how the Council's wider work on theory of change can support this work.

3.29 **Re-establishing our older people's forum and older people's groups** - we already have a number of older people's groups operating across the borough (and registered a new group last year (United Ladies N16 which mainly engages

Asian older women). However, evaluation of our warm spaces demonstrated that social isolation remains a very real issue for many older housing residents and we are keen to develop a wider network which can help us to further develop our approach, linked to the Ageing Well policy framework. Linked to this, we will also be looking to extend our digital skills offer, to help older residents get on line, working in partnership with Adult Education and other providers.

3.30 **Improving our understanding of local communities** - in parallel to work on improving information on the profile of involved residents, we will be looking to create social and demographic profiles of our neighbourhoods, drawing upon more information from the 2021 Census, augmented by local knowledge of communities and local groups/ organisations we can partner with and feedback from the Council's equalities forum and networks. This will help us to refine and target our work more effectively and align with wider work to support the Council's anti-racist and equalities agenda.

4. CONCLUSION - MONITORING IMPACT

4.1 Since the RES was adopted in December 2022, we have made some inroads into taking its commitments and actions forward, within the context of the action plan that covers a number of years, and we recognise there remains much more to do.

4.2 The approach to resident engagement is central to our wider service improvement journey and one of the ways to measure improvement will be via the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) which will also be used by the Regulator for Social Housing to measure tenant satisfaction. We have recently undertaken our annual STAR Survey where we measure the TSMs and we are starting to see the impact of the changes we are implementing in the results. We have seen improvements in all the TSMs, the key ones that relate to the RES are set out below.

Measure	2023/4	2022/3
TP06 Satisfaction that landlord listens to views & acts upon them	54%	44%
TP07 Satisfaction that landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter	71%	56%
TP08 Agreement that landlord treats tenants fairly & with respect	70%	61%
TP11 Satisfaction landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhood	69%	56%

4.3 In the year ahead, we want to create more opportunities, to hear directly from residents, with reviews of policy and procedures and resident scrutiny reviews offering more opportunities to influence our services. We will also be looking to chart our impact against the new tenant satisfaction measures as well as other local indicators and wider STAR survey.

APPENDIX 1 - RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: Communicating our approach to damp and mould

Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, who died at just two years of age due to prolonged exposure to mould in his home environment, damp and mould have been regular features in the local and national press, with many Hackney housing residents rightly concerned about the risk this poses to them and their families.

In Housing Services we recognised that our historic response to damp and mould had not always been good enough and that we needed to redouble our efforts to reassure residents of our commitment to tackle this issue. An action plan to strengthen our approach was developed and included a wide range of actions:

- Setting a target inspect all reports of damp and mould within five working days
- Launching a 24-hour response to all reports of leaks
- Setting up a dedicated hotline in our repairs contact centre to speed up getting issues of damp and mould reported
- Prioritising our damp and mould cases to take account of the the severity of the case, and the age and health of the people living in the home
- Directing more of our housing budgets to support our work to combat damp and mould, with an extra £1m invested to help expand our repairs service and to provide a swift, more focused response to reported problems
- Ensuring that all our housing officers are fully aware of the signs of damp and mould and how to ensure it is properly reported
- Working with our tenant management organisations that manage many of our estates to ensure we have a joined-up, clear and standard response for tackling damp and mould, and that no cases fall through the gaps

The action we have taken on damp and mould has been promoted to residents extensively through different communication channels, including updates on our website, through articles in Love Hackney, and via regular blogs by the Cabinet Member for Housing Services and Resident Participation.

We have also produced a leaflet for residents setting out the steps they can take to manage damp and mould in their homes and the support available if they are struggling to heat their homes, and developed online videos about tackling damp and mould in the home.

Our focus on this important area of work will continue through the winter months, with articles in the November 2023 edition of Love Hackney, and new videos on damp and mould going live over the next few weeks.

Case Study 2: Supporting resident sustainment

Our Financial Inclusion Team play an important role in supporting tenants who are struggling to maintain their tenancies, with many successful outcomes:

Tenants' circumstances:

Miss P was a minor who had recently lost her mother, the main tenancy holder. After her mother's death, her brother and his partner moved in to take care of her. However, Miss P was unable to claim Housing Benefits or Universal Credit as she was not old enough and not the tenant, which led to rent arrears. At the time, she was studying for her GCSEs and was under considerable stress due to the situation at home while also grieving for her mother.

Issues presented:

The team had to help the tenant resolve the following issues:

- Tenancy Issues - Miss P was uncertain about her tenancy situation, being a minor, and the property she lived in was too large for her needs at the time.
- Claiming Housing Costs - as a minor she was ineligible for Universal Credit Housing Costs, resulting in considerable rent arrears.

Casework:

When the case was referred to the team, rent arrears had already reached £12,000, and the team needed to prevent further escalation. The Financial Inclusion Officer investigated and found that Universal Credit regulations allowed a guardian for a qualifying child to claim the Housing Costs Element on their behalf.

Miss P's brother and his partner had moved into the property to care for her, following advice from social services to apply for guardianship. The Housing Officer was able to grant the tenancy in trust to her brother.

When the UC claim was approved, the arrears on the account had reached £11,000. The team managed to secure a backdate of £4,000, reducing the arrears to £7,000. We submitted a request for a rent arrears write-off, as the arrears had accrued through no fault of the tenant.

Outcomes:

This was a successful case involving a very vulnerable resident in a difficult situation due to her mother's death. It also involved a complex area of tenancy law and benefit regulations. As a result of the Financial Inclusion Officer's intervention, the rent arrears were reduced to less than £1,000, and the tenant was about £600 better off every month due to claiming the Housing Costs Element for help with her rent. Additionally, her brother was able to claim the Child Element under Universal Credit, and we secured a backdated UC payment of £4,000.

Case Study 3: Developing Kingsgate Estate TRA

Kingsgate Estate was an unrepresented estate in the central housing neighbourhood. Fees from a mobile telephone mast on the estate had historically been ring fenced for estate residents to spend on communal projects, but for many years Kingsgate residents did not engage with consultations to decide how the funds should be spent.

In 2022, the Resident Participation (RP) Team took a three-pronged approach to engage residents; an online consultation, a paper survey; and an in person community meeting held on the estate. Using different techniques proved more successful, with more residents engaging and the meeting provided a good opportunity for residents to discuss ideas and commit to work together. This enthusiasm resulted in a programme of actions, including plans for community events, a community gardening project, and a formal residents' group.

The RP team supported the residents to write a constitution and explore what governance arrangements they would need for the TRA and their wider engagement work. After a few months of work, an inaugural Annual General Meeting was called and the residents successfully registered as a TRA with Housing Services.



The community garden was the first project the group took forward. The RP officers worked up a budget to kick start the project, including some of the aerial mast money, plus community development and big lunch funding. We then partnered with

Groundwork to help residents design the garden and to build it with some support from corporate volunteers. The first event was a community day in the community garden space.

Housing Officer Celestine Udenze volunteered to join residents on a Saturday and helped to build the community garden: *"I wanted to join the garden building day as residents had volunteered their time, and I wanted to show support to the new TRA and to establish a new relationship with the residents. Residents often only meet me when things are going wrong and I wanted to show that I was here for them when they were doing positive things. I don't actually mind getting my hands dirty and I had a great time meeting lots of residents and doing something that will have a long lasting impact on the estate"*

The TRA has now been established for six months and is making good use of the community hall to host their meetings and run TRA training sessions and plan to hold a number for future events there with their remaining aerial mast money. The TRA Chair commented:

"We are so happy that this has finally got people interested and involved. The community garden project has given everyone something to work towards and really brought everyone together. I live on the other side of the estate and I never really spent time on this side, I have met some really lovely people through this. We hope the momentum continues and we get even more people interested in activities. Louisa, Alice and our Housing Officer Celestine have been great at helping us every step of the way."

Case Study 4: Developing our approach to estate surgeries

A pilot weekly estate surgeries programme was launched across the borough in October 2022. This was widely publicised in Love Hackney, on Twitter and other social media, and with targeted posters on our housing estates. Surgeries are provided by Housing Officers in up to three hour slots at varying times during weekdays. Access was originally on a walk-in basis, with no appointment required.

Development of this approach reflects Housing Services commitment to providing accessible face-to-face communication options for residents, following the closure of neighbourhood housing offices. In addition to the surgeries, housing residents can still access services via the weekday walk-in service at Hackney Service Centre (HSC) and Woodberry Down housing office.

As the pilot surgery programme attracted very few residents, we have now flexed our approach to reflect feedback from residents. This highlighted a preference for surgeries at libraries, with these venues identified as the top choice, as well as some demand for evening sessions. We have also sought to widen the model to work with voluntary sector partners who can provide additional support and advice to residents.



As a result, our new approach now includes:

- Library-based surgeries at Homerton and Shoreditch which will be extended to Stamford Hill, Clapton, and Dalson libraries
- Surgeries co-located with voluntary and community sector groups:

- Connecting All Communities (Homerton Wick)
 - Idia's Community Kitchen (Shoreditch)
 - Volunteer Centre Hackney (Stoke Newington)
 - Woodberry Aid - Stamford Hill
 - Clapton Common - Stamford Hill
- An option to book an online surgery appointment and identify any special requirements in advance e.g language support or hearing loops
 - If a library or appropriate VCS surgery services is not available within 800m of our estates we will continue to provide an estate-based surgery offer
 - An option for home visits for residents who are unable to visit surgeries, perhaps due to mobility or other health issues
 - A three month pilot of online evening appointments up to 7 pm with housing officers to test demand.

Feedback from GPs in the borough has indicate that housing issues are increasingly raised by their patients and to respond, we are also working with Volunteer Centre Hackney (VCH) to co-locate surgeries at the following practices:

- Shoreditch: The Lawson Practice
- Central: Richmond Road Practice
- Homerton Central: Elsdale Surgery
- Homerton Wick: The Lea Surgery
- Stoke Newington: Somerford Grove Practice
- Clapton: The Nightingale Practice
- Stamford Hill: Heron/Cedar Practices

We will continually flex and evaluate the surgery model to focus on what works, and to test new ideas, based on feedback from our residents.

Case Study 5: Box Up Youth Project - Colville Estate Based Programme

Colville Estate in Shoreditch covers a large area split by roads which can make it feel fragmented. As a regeneration estate, the TRA has also struggled to resolve some of the issues it faces and highlighted a need for more activities for young residents and community events.

During summer 2022, the Resident Participation (RP) Team carried out some detached outreach on the estate and commissioned a six-week youth programme on the estates multi-use games area (MUGA) to engage a greater number of young people and get a better understanding of their needs. This identified a demand for more physical activities such as boxing or martial arts delivered at a hyper-local level.

Based on that feedback the RP team worked with the youth providers network to identify a suitable provider, leading to the commissioning of Box Up Crime - a youth organisation that uses sport, and boxing in particular, as a tool to inspire, educate and develop young individuals.



Box Up Crime developed a six week non-contact boxing project focusing on two different age groups (7-12 years old and 13-19 years old). The project was delivered at Colville community hall in 1 hour slots each consisting of 45 mins of non-contact boxing activities and a 15 minute circle time mentoring which focused on different motivational and behavioural topics such as leadership, positivity and self-resilience. The attributes they focus on developing are leadership, discipline, behaviour, a

focus on positive activities, respect for authority, and improved communications when challenged.

So far, the sessions have attracted 65 children and young people, with 45 attending multiple times. Resident feedback has been very positive with young Colville residents and their parents - many report that young people are growing in confidence and enjoying using the community hall as a resource.

The initial pilot has now been extended twice and has run for 10 months of this year (2023), The pilot was funded through the RP team for the initial six weeks, with the TRA supporting the follow-on sessions.

Case Study 6: Examples of Housing services commissioned youth programmes

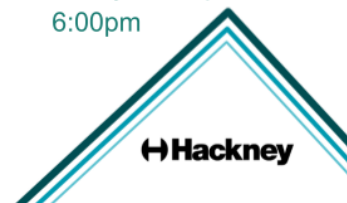
Youth Development Fund

Stoke Newington- Access To Sports



- Lordship South - Monday's 4:00pm - 5:30pm
- Yorkshire Grove - Tuesday's 4:00pm - 5:30pm
- Kings Crescent - Friday's 4:00pm - 6:00pm

Working for better homes



Youth Development Fund

Stamford Hill - Immediate Theatre

Where: Lea View Community Hall

When: Wednesdays 4:30pm - 6:00pm



Working for better homes

Case Study 7: Sandford Court and St. Andrews Mews Community Garden

St. Andrew's Mews and Sandford Court is an unrepresented estate in the Stamford Hill area. The estate has one very involved resident who attends the Stamford Hill Neighbourhood Panel and champions estate issues, but she does not have capacity to do more.

During an RP-led engagement event in 2022 local residents asked whether an unused walled space on the estate could be repurposed as a community garden. Residents explained that this area attracted anti-social behaviour; it was normally either scattered with broken glass or used as an outdoor toilet.



Following on from this event, the Resident Participation (RP) Team explored the potential to transform this space into a community garden, with consultation with the wider estate communities at Sandford Court and St. Andrews Mews undertaken via online, paper surveys and at drop in events in the proposed garden space.

Residents voted in favour of the proposed garden and agreed to make use of the estates' community development funding across two years to fund its development. The team also brought in Groundwork London, a charity mobilising practical community action to improve lives, create better places and protect our planet.

The RP team developed a programme of engagement events across 2023. Together with residents and Groundwork, we built new raised beds, a potting area, tool storage and compost bays and installed a water tank and a picnic bench.



The RP team also ran a youth activity day with the support of Groundwork's community gardener to engage children from the estate who designed and painted a mural on the inside wall of the garden. This activity was developed to get buy-in from the younger residents and ensure they felt part of the project.



With the final volunteering day in the garden coming up this month, residents, with the support of the Resident Participation Team, are now working up to their Inaugural AGM, where they will adopt a constitution and elect a committee to manage the Community Garden and the existing food growing plots on Sandford Court Estate.

The garden and new community space is already proving to be a success. Residents have taken on temporary plot holder agreements with support from gardeners leading the informal *St. Andrews Mews and Sandford Court Gardeners Group*, and are making the best of this growing season to plant fruits and vegetables. The garden has changed from an empty grey space that attracted anti-social behaviour to a space full of colour. Neighbours who never previously met have come together, breaking down barriers and helping to reduce isolation.

EXTRACT FROM RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT MASTER PLAN

Commitment	Our approach - where we are	Future milestones	Due Date	Status (RAG)	Outcome	Responsible/ Name/ Title	September 2023 Update	Link/ Documentation
Refresh our approach to resident-led scrutiny reviews and provide resources for at least two reviews per year. Procedure to include arrangements for promoting scrutiny opportunities across different communities and developing accredited training packages for scrutiny group members.	Arrangements for re-establishing resident-led scrutiny are currently being developed by the Resident Participation Team, with a view to establishing a new scrutiny approach and setting up a panel within 2023/24, and carrying out a pilot review in April - June 2024. Learning from this review will help to shape the final approach, with full rollout of scrutiny	- Develop a new resident scrutiny framework, including arrangements for recruiting and training panel members, selecting scrutiny topics and ensuring follow up on agreed recommendations /proposals	April - September 2023	Completed	Demonstrable evidence that tenants actively scrutinise our services /policies and that we make changes based on their experience and lived experience. TSMs - Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenants views and acts upon them	Agnieszka Kostus/ Oliur Rahman	The scrutiny framework has been developed and signed off by HSMT, due to go to the RLG in November for resident sign off.	
		- Agree scrutiny framework and approach with HSMT	30/10/2023	Completed		Agnieszka Kostus/ Oliur Rahman/HSMT	The framework was approved by HSMT on 23/10/23.	HSMT Report Scrutiny
		- Agree scrutiny framework and approach with RLG	30/11/2023	Not due		Agnieszka Kostus/ Oliur Rahman/RLG	This will take place on 30/11/23.	HSMT Report Scrutiny

	reviews from September 2024 onwards.	- Recruitment and training of Panel members and selection of pilot topic	March- April 2024	Not due		Agnieszka Kostus/ Oliur Rahman	Not due yet	
		- Pilot review undertaken	April - June 2024	Not due		Agnieszka Kostus/ Oliur Rahman	not due yet	
		-Learning and evaluation of pilot review to inform full programme roll-out from September 2024 onwards (2 per year)	July -August 2024	Not due		Agnieszka Kostus/ Oliur Rahman	Not due yet	