

Subject:	Resident Involvement Review		
Date of Meeting:	14 June 2017		
Report of:	Larissa Reed, Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Hilary Edgar	Tel: 01273 293250
	Email:	Hilary.edgar@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the resident involvement review and makes recommendations based on its findings to broaden resident engagement in Housing's landlord services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Housing & New Homes Committee agrees the recommendations set out in the resident involvement review action plan in Appendix 1 of this report. These can be considered in two groups:
- 2.2 Action 1 – a recommendation to review the four Area Panels for the remainder of the municipal year, to develop more engaging agendas and to make recommendations at the end of this period to strengthen the formal resident involvement structure.
- 2.3 Actions 2 – 34 a body of recommendations covering all aspects of resident involvement work.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The resident involvement review was carried out between May 2016 and May 2017. It was made up of individual projects reviewing specific areas of resident involvement and sought the views of residents through surveys, meetings, working groups and at the city wide conferences held during this period. This work was overseen by the Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group.
- 3.2 The purpose of the review was to improve the way Housing provides landlord services to residents, recognising that to get this right it needs to listen to residents.

3.3 What did the review find out about Resident Involvement?

- 3.4 There is a very small number of valued, active residents who drive resident associations and come to council meetings.
- 3.5 There is a genuine commitment from staff, elected members and tenants to engage in effective involvement.
- 3.6 'Resident Involvement' is currently badged as meetings and events; other parts of Housing carry out surveys and use feedback, but this is not linked to Resident Involvement work.
- 3.7 Of 616 people who responded to a survey about resident involvement, the top two ways residents wanted to get involved were on line and postal surveys.
- 3.8 A survey of 'hard to reach' groups found that 70% of those sampled said they had not previously been asked for their views.

3.9 What did the review find out about the current use of resident involvement to improve Housing services?

- 3.10 There are many examples of association activities that lead to neighbourhood improvements and positive experiences for those who take part in them.
- 3.11 The format of council led meetings does not always deliver the improvements and changes that residents want.
- 3.12 Area Panels are the main body for residents' representatives to hold the council to account and get answers to questions. The design and timetable of these meetings means this doesn't always happen effectively. From the 16 Area Panels (four rounds of four panels) held between December 2014 to December 2015, 15 out of 16 of the agendas for these meetings were the same. Only one recommendation was made from these Area Panels to the Housing & New Homes Committee.
- 3.13 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel has only carried out three service reviews since it was set up in 2013, is difficult to sustain and requires the support of one fulltime officer.
- 3.14 Service Improvement Groups have worked with officers on policy issues and new areas of work that have shaped services and, in some cases, led to committee reports.

3.15 What did the review find out about the cost of Resident Involvement?

- 3.16 The review found that approximately £120,000 per annum is spent on providing the current resident involvement framework. This does not include staff time spent on other resident related activities or the Estates Development Budget.

- 3.17 A draft report that set out the main findings and recommendations from the review was presented to the Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group. It sought to address the three challenges of how to engage more residents, how to improve the outcomes of engagement and how to improve the value for money of resident involvement.
- 3.18 This report included proposals for :
- 3.19 A new resident involvement framework for Housing landlord services.
- 3.20 A new offer to support council tenants and resident associations engage with their landlord.
- 3.21 Developing a model to carry out cost based analyses of resident involvement to evaluate its impact and value to both parties.
- 3.22 The detailed recommendations from the review are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 Proposals for a new resident involvement structure

- 4.2 In response to the problems identified with the current Area Panel meetings the review proposed holding one city-wide panel instead of four separate meetings. These would be held five times a year and chaired by the Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee with an elected resident Vice Chair. All members of the Housing & New Homes Committee would be invited to these meetings and the agenda would be wider in scope than the current Area Panel meetings and include items set by residents.
- 4.3 There would be area based resident only meetings supported by the Resource Centre before each of the citywide meetings. These would be used to filter residents' queries using the '3 star' process (1 and 2 star items to be resolved by resident representatives, 3 star items being referred to the city wide panel).
- 4.4 The Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group suggested that rather than seek to implement the new framework on a permanent basis that it was trialled between September 2017 and March 2018.
- 4.5 At the Special Area Panel meeting on 25 May 2017, in response to resident representatives' concerns over the change from area based panels to a citywide one, this recommendation was changed. At that meeting it was agreed to maintain the four Area Panels in their current form, but with an additional round of meetings to fit with the Housing & new Homes Committee cycle, and for a Resident Involvement Officer to work with each panel Chair and resident representatives to structure the agendas in a more engaging way and for the meetings to be reviewed for the remainder of the municipal year.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group met with officers six times between June and October to discuss the review as it developed. In the original timeline for this work it was proposed that the October meeting of this group would be the last, with a final report setting out the review recommendations presented at the November/December 2016 Area Panels, then at the January 2017 meeting of the Housing & New Homes Committee.
- 5.2 The Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group did not fully support the initial proposals to change the Resident Involvement structure and a further five meetings were held with this group between October 2016 and May 2017 to develop this part of the recommendations. At its May meeting a majority of the Service Improvement Group voted to support the move from area based panels to one citywide panel meeting on a trial basis.
- 5.3 At the May Special Area Panel meeting resident representatives raised concerns at the proposal to move away from area based meetings. In response to this the Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee, who was chairing the meeting, proposed that point one in the action plan in Appendix 1 was changed from having one city wide panel to 'the four Area Panels remain and continue to be reviewed until March 2018', (when the last round of panel meetings of the 2017/18 municipal year will take place). The Chair of the meeting added that during this period a Resident Involvement Officer would be assigned to each Area Panel to develop a more engaging agenda with the panel chair and resident representatives.
- 5.4 There was a vote by Area Panel resident representatives on the Chair's proposal, with the following result:
- 21 in favour
 - 0 against
 - 0 abstained
- 5.5 The Chair also asked the meeting if they were happy to vote points 2-34 in the recommendations (in Appendix 1) in one block, with the following result:
- 18 in favour
 - 2 against
 - 2 abstained
- 5.6 There was a further vote on whether the resident representatives would support the recommendations, with the following result:
- 14 in favour
 - 3 against
 - 4 abstained

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Resident Involvement review was launched in May 2016, with the report to Area Panels concluding ‘the outcome of this work will be a set of recommendations to deliver a resident involvement framework that gathers and uses resident feedback in the planning and delivery of services which, once in place, will be reflected in increased resident satisfaction with Housing’s landlord services’.
- 6.2 It is hoped that the recommendations made from the work that has been undertaken by residents and officers since last May, and set out in this report, meet this requirement.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 This report recommends that the four area panels meet five times a year, in line with Housing & New Homes Committee timetable rather than the current four times per year, so a further four meetings. This also means that there will be a further residents' only meeting for each area. This will increase the costs of resident involvement. The cost of the extra meetings is estimated to be £4,000 per year. There are also other areas of the action plan such as the republishing of the ‘Everyone Counts’ leaflet, which will add further minor cost implications. All costs will need to be met from the current Housing Revenue Account budget resources.
- 7.2 Given the costs of supporting the resident involvement structure are currently estimated at £120,000 (as mentioned in paragraph 3.15), it is important to demonstrate that this is giving value for money for residents. As mentioned at 3.20, the resident involvement review that was presented to the Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group, proposed to develop a model to carry out cost based analyses of resident involvement to evaluate the costs and the benefits to both residents and the council. It is therefore important that this work is continued to shape the service in the future.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 30/05/17

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 The Housing and New Homes Committee is responsible for discharging the council’s functions as a landlord. This will include compliance with the Homes and Community Agency’s requirements in the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. That standard includes the following:-

Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the formulation of their landlord’s housing related policies and strategic priorities, the making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards, the scrutiny of their landlord’s performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved.

These requirements should be borne in mind when considering changes to the work of the Area Panels.

Any review of the Area Panels' Terms of Reference will need to be referred to Policy, Resources and Growth Committee for approval.

Lawyer Consulted:

Liz Woodley

Date: 30/05/17

Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 The resident involvement review found that only a small number of council tenants and leaseholders are actively engaged in services provided by Housing. The number and profile of these residents means that the council is not necessarily meeting the standard expected by the Homes & Community Agency to 'demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.' The recommendations from the review aim to engage a wider and more diverse range of residents in housing management services.
- 7.5 An equalities impact assessment is being carried out as part of the review and will be used to monitor the impact of engaging more residents in Housing services.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.6 Feedback from residents during the review was that there are a number who want to be included through on-line discussions and surveys. While there will still be face to face meetings, more on-line activities will help to widen engagement in a more sustainable way.

Any Other Significant Implications

- 7.7 None.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Resident Involvement Review 2017 Action Plan.

Background Documents

1. Project reports from the Resident Involvement review covering; tenant and resident associations and informal resident groups, communications, the Resource Centre, training for residents and resident representatives, transport, residents' newsletters, Homing In, the Scrutiny Panel, the council led consultation structure, community rooms, the Estates Development Budget.