

1. Discussion paper for consultation and comment:
Area Panel and Involvement and Empowerment Service Improvement Group

The Community Engagement Team is a cross tenure team that supports resident engagement with council services including the council as a landlord. The team supports a collaborative relationship between residents and services. This report proposes an enhanced framework to strengthen and widen the opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to be engaged with the council as their landlord. This aim to increase and diversify resident involvement, develop further coproduction and participatory approaches, maximise the impact of the Estates Development Budget and change the culture between council and residents. The proposals will build on and augment the council's current approaches to consultation with tenants and leaseholders on landlord/tenant matters.

2. Recommendations for change

- the delivery of more 'pro-active' styles of engagement with tenants and leaseholders to consult and engage with a wider and more diverse group of residents.
- The proposed changes to the current engagement's structures for tenants and leaseholders as set out in Appendix One.
- the maximisation of Estate Development Budget by agreeing to fund revenue, as well as capital projects
- Supporting tenant and leaseholder input with the Environmental Improvements Budget to give tenants a greater say over environmental projects
- To work with the Estate Development Budget [residents] panel and develop 'participatory budgeting' style voting system for EDB, for approval by Housing Committee in March 2022

3. Context/ Background Information

National research shows that *'despite many different approaches and activities, it is not always clear what tenant involvement is seeking to achieve and why it is undertaken'* (Regulatory Board for Wales, 2019)

In Brighton and Hove engagement with communities is a core priority within the Corporate Plan 'A Stronger City' which states we

- Work alongside communities on what matters to them
- Increase participation by using Neighbourhood Action Plans and Ward Budgets
- Preserve and develop the civic spaces to ensure people have space to meet and get online, preventing digital exclusion
- Ensure that the city continues to be a place where people feel safe, supported and valued.

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard and section 105 of the Housing Act set out clear standards and duties for consultation on matters of housing management

- a. A landlord authority shall maintain such arrangements as it considers appropriate to enable those of its secure tenants who are likely to be substantially affected by a matter of housing management
- to be informed of the authority's proposals in respect of the matter and
 - to make their views known to the authority within a specified period;
 - and the authority shall, before making any decision on the matter, consider any representations made to it in accordance with those arrangements.
- b. For the purposes of this section, a matter is one of housing management if, in the opinion of the landlord authority, it relates to
- the management, maintenance, improvement or demolition of dwelling-houses let by the authority under secure tenancies, or
 - the provision of services or amenities in connection with such dwelling-houses;
 - but not so far as it relates to the rent payable under a secure tenancy or to charges for services or facilities provided by the authority.
- c. This section applies to matters of housing management which, in the opinion of the landlord authority, represent
- a new programme of maintenance, improvement or demolition, or
 - a change in the practice or policy of the authority,
 - and are likely substantially to affect either its secure tenants as a whole or a group of them who form a distinct social group or occupy dwelling-houses which constitute a distinct class (whether by reference to the kind of dwelling-house, or the housing estate or other larger area in which they are situated).

Joint Green/Labour Housing Programme - the proposals in this paper will contribute to meeting many of the key priorities such as:

- Working in partnership with the existing forums and expanding the involvement of residents in temporary and emergency accommodation
- Improving transparency and accountability in the housing department
- Ensuring housing tenants have more coproduction opportunities in decision-making around housing policy and service delivery – to work with the council not just be consulted
- Extending participatory budgeting in environmental improvements to estates
- Reviewing community involvement in housing
- Meeting the regulator’s Involvement and Empowerment standard
- Developing and implementing a decent environment standard for council estates to go alongside the Decent Homes standard
- Involving residents in fire safety
- Ensuring greater transparency and early involvement with leaseholders over proposed capital works
- Continuing to ensure that leaseholders voices are heard and financial support is offered where necessary

4. Current Picture

In May 2019 Brighton and Hove City Council created a cross tenure Community Engagement Team. The aim of the team was also to support strong, active and inclusive communities that can influence and shape the city in which they live and work with the outcome being.

“Local people are effectively informed, engaged, involved and empowered by the council. They actively help define and design local priorities and policies, deliver and evaluate services and inform council decision making in areas that impact on their lives.”

The CE Team are key to providing the support to tenant and leaseholder engagement and ensuring the statutory duties are met, However, having one engagement team has enabled tenants and leaseholder to be engaged with a broad range of council services, supporting involvement in local priorities that include housing issues but are not limited to these.

Operational context - Engagement Structures -

There is a long-established operating model within tenant and leaseholder engagement which has been reviewed many times over the last 10 years, alongside smaller reviews and explorations of how to involve and engage more people in Tenant and Resident Associations (TRA) with the recognition of both formal and informal groups.

The last significant review was in 2016, whilst there were wider ranging recommendations only small changes have been achieved.

Changing engagement culture, practice and structures is difficult and there is not a widely accepted benchmark across local authorities. There is also a level of understandable resistance to change, particularly from the residents who have invested time and energy in the current structures for fear change will reduce influence and voice and dilute tenant involvement.

There is a small number of valued & dedicated tenants and leaseholders who are actively involved in working with the council on improving housing stock and services. However, whilst these tenants and leaseholders continue to work hard and give huge amounts of their time to being involved, they are only a very small percentage of the wider tenant and leaseholder population - approximately 0.4% of the total tenant/leaseholder population.

Evidence and statistics

There is some disparity in representation in relation to the people who are housing in our council stock

- 90% of engaged resident are over 50 and yet 37% of BHCC tenants are under 50.
- 10% of our tenants identify within a minority ethnic group but we only have a tiny proportion involved
- We have no young people involved in housing management
- We have a large section of people with disabilities and older people actively involved

In 2016 there was a review of resident involvement, approximately 5% of the tenant population participated. A series of core recommendations were made including providing more on-line opportunities for involvement and reducing the four Area Panels to one core Panel meeting. The latter was not implemented due to concerns about losing space and time for discussing specific localised issues. Many of the 2016 recommendations are outstanding

The review found that from 16 Area Panels 15 had the same agenda, with just the East Area Panel having an additional agenda item. In 2019 this had improved slightly with some additional area-based agenda items, but the core agenda remains the same in each area. This not only results in the officers reporting the same information at four different meetings, but the lack of a City-Wide Panel doesn't allow residents to share and explore the similarities across areas. This can result in piecemeal changes rather than looking strategically at a problem.

As a result of COVID 19 Area Panels have been held online and we have explored having one larger meeting with four breakout meetings to still retain the important area focus. Feedback from the first of these meetings has been extensive and mixed. Overall, the online format made it difficult to have a larger and longer meeting and residents preferred a small area-based meeting where more people were able to speak. The postponement of meetings due to Covid has created a backlog of 3-star items that means, for the moment, there is a preference among residents and members to keep to area-based meetings. Once [social distancing measures are lifted the format of Area Panel will need to

be reviewed to ensure we are addressing both local and strategic residents priorities.

Feedback from the 2019 Star survey showed that 67% of tenants and leaseholders remained satisfied with their involvement with the council. Whilst this is down three points compared to 2016, it still demonstrates the same improvement in the proportion of 'very satisfied' responses. Indeed, whilst making allowances for the change in methodology this year, it remains true that council's performance in this respect continues to generally trend upwards. However, when replying to the question respondents were just as likely to consider day to day transactions such as telephone queries and the repairs process, as they are to think about wider resident involvement and consultation. As such, the strong score is most likely linked to the generally high standard of customer service that tenants experienced.

The main demographic difference was age, with older tenants (aged 65+) significantly more satisfied (78%), whereas the opposite was true for the under 35's and those aged 35 - 49 (58% and 60% respectively). This is reflected in the make up of our most engaged residents, with very limited engagement from within these age groups.

Currently it is very difficult to evaluate any change that is created through the tenant and leaseholder engagement structures and there is no formal process to do this.

In early 2020 each Area Panel had a workshop on increasing resident involvement and 3 residents have voluntarily written full papers with proposals for change. Summary of feedback was as follows:

The burden of meetings is considerable
Information isn't joined up across meetings, creating duplication
The structures limit representation from tenants and leaseholders
Ways to get involved need to be expanded to interest more people
We need to do more online
Engagement/Involvement needs to be fun
Residents want to do things in their communities and on estates, they need support and resources to do this
Tenant Associations need support to achieve their aims and increase involvement
Residents want their input to create real change – they often feel the council is tokenistic about its engagement
Reports need to use less jargon
The council and officers need to be more open to input, constructive criticism and change

Outcomes for involvement should be clear and measured so we can see what has been achieved
Trust and confidence is a concern of residents in officer and the decision making process
Decisions are already made prior to their involvement, officers talk 'at them' with information and there is little time for real debate and opportunity to influence – 'it's a done deal'

Leaseholder Engagement:

There is a separate Leaseholder Engagement Strategy that was approved at Housing Committee in June 2018

The Leaseholder Engagement is supported in a number of ways.

- Leaseholder Action Group
- A dedicated Senior Leaseholder Liaison officer
- Involvement in the other formal engagement channels such resident associations, Area Panels and Service Improvement Groups
- Task and finish groups

Most often tenant and leaseholders have shared outcomes for the quiet enjoyment of a good quality home, to ensure value for money with spend of Housing Revenue Funds and to have a say in the services they receive.

However, there are issues that are very specific to leaseholders such as the cost of major works, billing and transparency of information that need exclusive engagement with the leaseholder rather than within the wider engagement structures.

Operational Context - Estate Development Budget (EDB)

The EDB process and budget £354,000 in 2020/21 is a fundamental means to engage and empower residents. It is an annual fund made available to tenants and leaseholders (as either formal or informal groups) to improve the quality of life.

Currently only a small number of tenants and leaseholders are successful in bidding for small capital works/equipment and an even smaller group of tenants and leaseholds comprise the decision-making panel. EDB funds are predominantly spent on capital works. However, there is no stipulation that EDB funding is restricted to capital work.

An internal audit of the EDB process 2018 found partial assurance in the process; 'weaknesses in the system of control and/or the level of non-compliance is such as to put the achievement of the system or service objectives at risk',

A resident led EDB review group was formed in response to the internal audit findings. The review group consists of residents drawn from the EDB Panel, Area Panels, Service Improvement Groups. The review group met seven times between July 2018 and January 2019 and were tasked to:

- Make EDB easier to understand and use

- Find ways to shorten the main bid process from application to the point of delivery
- Introduce new processes to encourage more and varied bids
- Ensure the processes are fair and equitable.

The group concluded resident dissatisfaction with the current scheme and a lack of clarity around EDB rules. The group made a series of recommendations (please see table in Appendix Four). Several of the recommendations from the EDB review have been implemented. The application process has been updated with a clear bidding and evaluation criteria now in place which aims to reduce the ambiguity of awarding funds.

There are outstanding recommendations which if implemented could considerably increase engagement and improve the fund's positive impact on tenants and leaseholders.

A specific recommendation from the EDB review group was for the council to provide a fund to support community revenue projects. This would enable groups to develop local activities within community rooms and on open space for example community fitness classes, arts and crafts groups, homework clubs, ICT classes. To address this, it is proposed that tenants and leaseholders can bid for revenue and capital projects through the EDB.

Further capital projects will also be funded through the £500k Environmental improvement budget (EIB). The two funds are complimentary and residents currently feed in views and priorities through the Community Engagement Team. Work is needed to expand participation in both bidding for EDB funds and in the decision-making processes. There is a small elected panel of residents that comprise the EDB decision making panel who evaluate the bids.

It is proposed that the EDB panel and EDB review group continue to work on options that form part of wider consultation, through local surveys, work with small groups, Homing-In and the Council's online consultation portal, to move towards a wider 'participatory budgeting' process for EDB. This would inform and engage more residents in both bidding and the decision-making process.

5. Future of Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Proposal

To widen and deepen engagement with tenants and leaseholders it will need us to expand the ways residents are able to be involved. Whilst there are already some good practices this paper proposes to develop and build on these, recognising communities play an important role in;

- Supporting the council to improve and measure performance
- Responding to challenges
- Improving the delivery of local services
- Providing community led independent activities and services
- Providing residents with the skills and methods to make a significant difference to the way services are shaped and delivered
- Developing different working practice that build a culture of collaboration and coproduction

Currently most of the engagement with tenants and leaseholders is carried out through meetings. This type of engagement will only ever be of interest to a small proportion of the community and often excludes those who are not able, keen or confident to attend. However, many people want to voice their view or do something about their estate, community or living conditions but are not sure how to do this.

The 2016 review acknowledged that the format of council led meetings does not always deliver the improvements and changes the residents want to see

The Community Engagement Team are working with many groups but to widen this engagement and meet the council's priorities and statutory duties we propose to develop these three core styles of engagement

Proactive Engagement – developing relationship with tenants by offering or joining everyday activities, consultations and events.

- Door knocking
- Questionnaires' and surveys
- Social media and online groups
- Support tenant and residents' groups to provide and deliver local activities and events
- Supporting and developing arts, cultural and fun days/events
- Networking and workshops
- Supporting residents to develop ideas and bid for EDB/EIB
- Developing Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Use of community rooms

This approach enables people to get involved or express their views on a wide range of council services, policies or practices in a more informal way

Responsive Engagement - supports and enables services in the council to speak to residents through outward communication and feedback.

- Supporting council departments and teams to engage with tenants and leaseholders
- Provide specific consultation and engagement workshops and facilitate events to engage communities in council/housing priorities
- Provide some financial support to tenant and leaseholder groups
- Providing area-based teams of community engagement officers and community development workers to support to neighbourhood groups residents, tenants and leaseholders and to work with the council and build their capacity to self-manage.
- Support tenants and leaseholder to develop their skills and knowledge through training and learning
- Commission other organisations to offer independent support to tenant and leaseholder groups
- Support ward councillors in their work with communities
- Facilitate the development of self-sustaining independent community groups

Structural Engagement – this is the most formal engagement. It is often meeting based and it used to look at, council policy and practice.

- Providing support to TRAs, and offering information, guidance and practical support to tenant, leaseholder and community representatives.
- Support to area based representative groups including Local Action Teams, Neighbourhood Forums
- Support to the Tenant and Leaseholder structures such as Area Panels, Service Improvement groups and specialist groups
- Commissioning training and learning for/with tenant and leaseholder representatives
- Supporting tenants and leaseholders to be representative and engage their communities
- Explore further engagement with people in temporary and emergency accommodation

These approaches are set out in more detail in Appendix Two

This work will be developed with a three-year plan to 20/21-22/23 in year one it is proposed to focus on the following actions:

Increase the **Proactive Engagement** – we aim to create a consistent programme over the 3 years with a specific approach to working with underrepresented groups

Year one

- Ensure community engagement has a regular and active social media presence
- Have a schedule of door knocking
- Send out 4 questionnaires' and surveys
- Networking and workshops x 6
- Have promotion on and offline for expanding EDB/EIB bids
- Develop 2 more Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Develop community room agreements, risk assessment and equalities impact support for management groups

Year Two

- Support all TRA's have a regular and active social media presence
- Have a schedule of door knocking
- Send out 2 questionnaires' and surveys
- Support a minimum of 2 tenant and residents' groups in each area to provide and deliver local activities and events
- Support and develop arts, cultural and fun days/events x 2
- Networking events x 6
- Have promotion on and offline for expanding EDB/EIB bids
- Develop 2 more Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Develop ways of engaging the BAMER communities
- Increase use of community rooms for diverse activities

Year Three

- Support all TRA's have a regular and active social media presence
- Have a schedule of door knocking
- Send out 2 questionnaires' and surveys
- Support a minimum of 2 tenant and residents' groups in each area to provide and deliver local activities and events
- Support and develop arts, cultural and fun days/events x 2
- Networking events x 6
- Have promotion on and offline for expanding EDB/EIB bids
- Develop 2 more Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Develop ways of engaging tenants and residents in underrepresented communities LGBTQ, older people (not in seniors' accommodation, young people and parents)

In light of Covid 19 these will need to be creative approaches with social distancing and safety as a top priority, however we still aim to deliver 'in person' approaches as well as online interactions.

Focus the **Responsive Engagement** on the key housing priorities for 20/21- 22/23

- **Year One**
- Consultation on the housing budget setting
- Consultation on the Allocations Policy
- Develop area plans that integrate the work of the Community Engagement Team and the commissioned Community Development Work, in order to provide a complete offer of engagement support and capacity building.
- Work with the tenants and leaseholder to develop a participatory budgeting programme to bring to Housing Committee for approval.
- Create a format for all reports to tenants and leaseholders that state the purpose of the engagement and the 'request' to the tenants i.e. decision making, information, debate, etc

Year Two

- Coproduce a new training and learning programme with the tenants and leaseholders.
- Develop an evaluation framework to tenant and leaseholder engagement
- Support an evaluation of the new repairs and maintenance service

Year three

- Set up a resident panel to support the commissioning of independent support to tenant and leaseholder groups
- Evaluation engagement – impact and evidence of change

Reorganise the Structural Engagement to create stronger governance with clearer lines of accountability and evidence of impact. It will also produce more opportunities for residents to be involved and share information

Year One

- Run 4 Area Panel meetings, 2 online meetings simultaneously Review regularly to ensure there are opportunities to raise city wide and strategic issues.
- Ensure the Housing Management governance structures are a clear, with accountability between Area Panels, Service Improvement Groups, city group and TRA's. Set up a process for Area panel Chairs to refer complex or longstanding to a Service Improvement Group to report back in more detail
- Merge the Service improvement groups from four to two with a focus on People and Buildings.
- Strengthen the Leaseholder Action Group to strengthen to becomes a key forum for council and leaseholder engagement
- Expand EDB to fund both capital and revenue projects.
- Increase the engagement of underrepresented communities within the tenant and resident associations
- the use of a co-production approach to work with tenants on the development of a Brighton and Hove "Decent environment standard" for housing estates, with this standard being reported to housing committee for adoption in June 2021

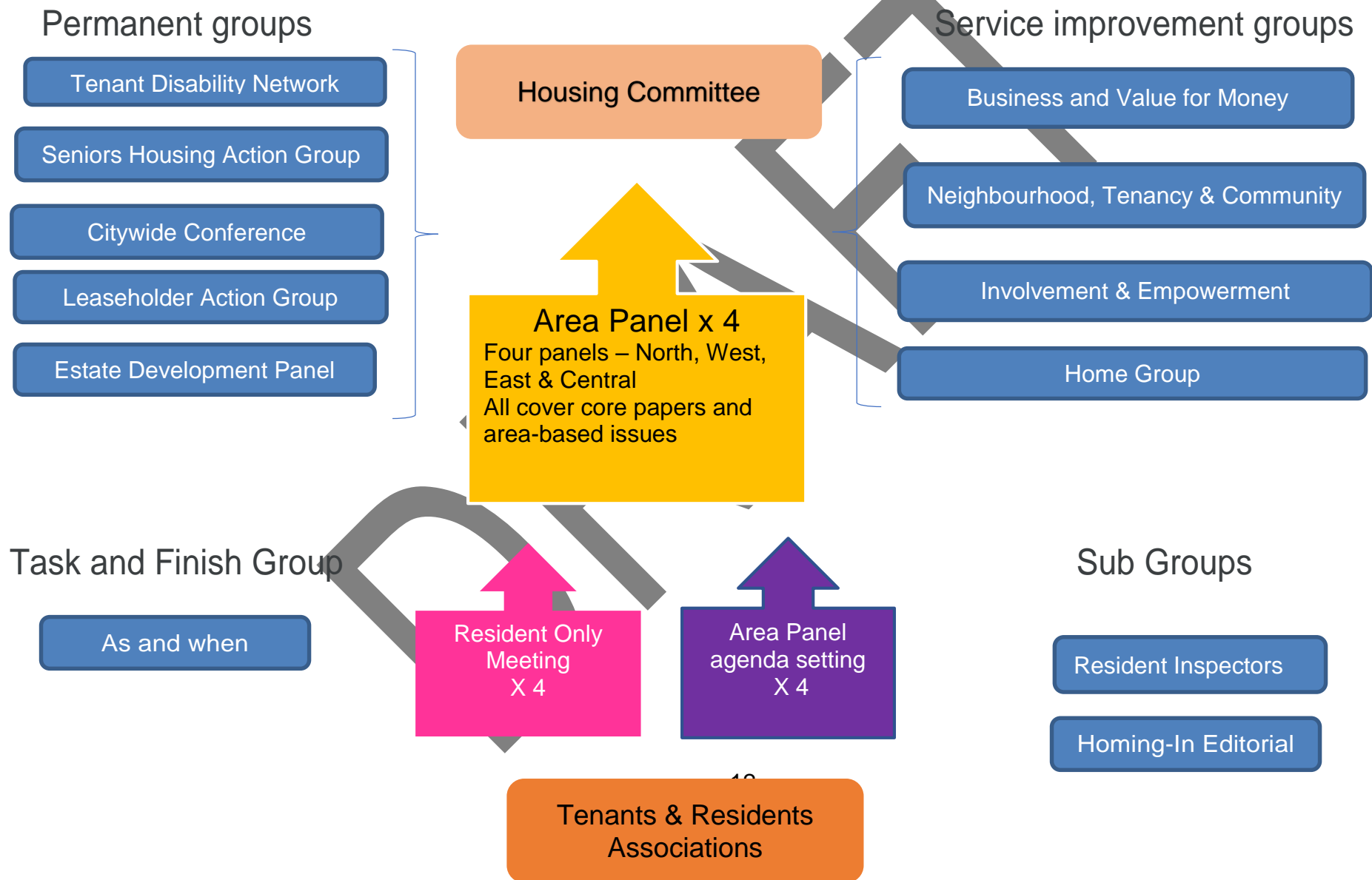
Year Two

- Develop a bespoke training and learning offer for TRA's and other tenant and leaseholder groups
- Implement all outstanding recommendations from the EDB review
- Develop work plans with outcomes and targets for all city wide group
- Increase the engagement of underrepresented communities within the Housing Management Structures

Year Three

- the integration of input from representative groups for residents living in temporary and emergency housing into structural engagement opportunities.
- Implement participatory budgeting programme across EDB and EIB
- devising measures to assess the impact and benefits for tenants of proactive, responsive and structural approaches to engagement, agreed with area panels and then subsequently to be reported back to area panels and housing committee on an annual basis

Appendix 1 / Current structure



Proposed Structure

Equalities / Identity Groups

- Tenant Disability Network
- Seniors Housing Action Group
- Leaseholder Action Group
- Temporary and Emergency Accommodation Groups

Interest Groups

- Citywide Conference
- Estate Development Panel

Task and Finish Groups

- As and when

Housing Committee

Area Panel x 4
Four panels – North, West, East & Central
All cover core papers and area-based issues

Resident Only Meeting X 4

Area Panel agenda setting X 1

Tenants & Residents Associations

Service improvement groups

People
Lettings
Tenancy
Star report
Tenants associations
Engagement
Communications
Consultations
Training
Anti-Social Behaviour
Estates – people, events, ASB etc.

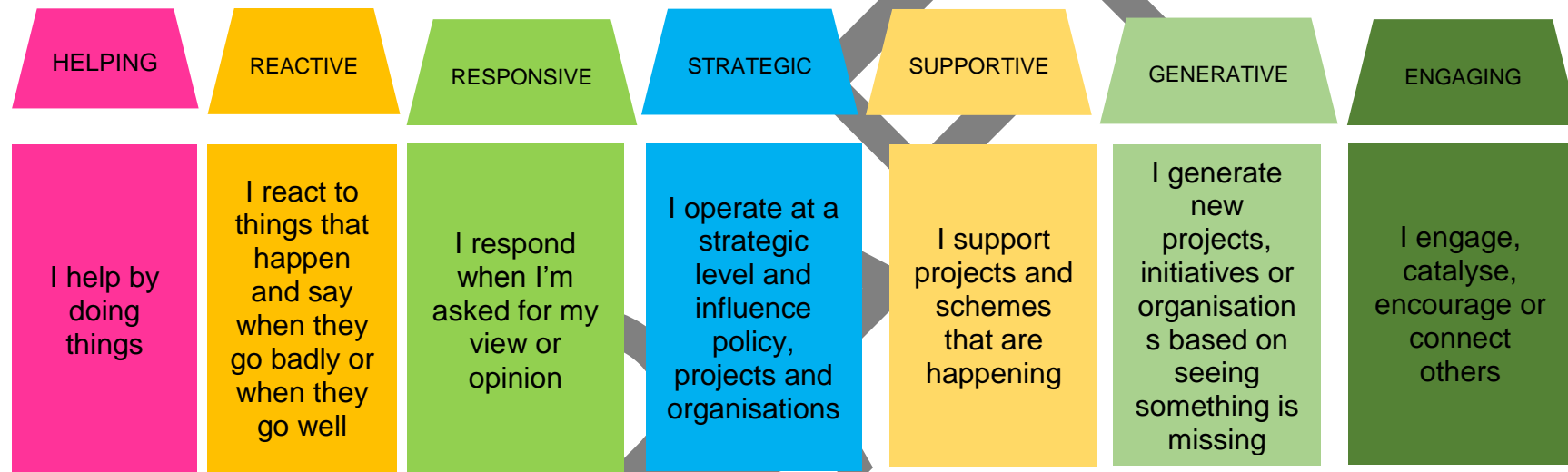
Buildings
Repairs
Maintenance
Planned works
Major Works
New Build
Estates – physical fencing, verges, open space etc.

Sub Groups

- Resident Inspectors
- Homing -In Editorial

Appendix 2 - Styles of engagement

To engage communities in a meaningful and valuable way we must ensure we are offering a range of opportunities that are; interesting, rewarding and accomplishing. We need to maintain enthusiasm and build trusting, open relationships. Different people will want to be involved in different ways. The diagram below helps us to consider the type of engagement opportunities we offer and help ensure we can support people in the right way.



Proactive Engagement - this enables us to build relationships with people that often do not wish to or cannot attend meetings. It reaches the people who are unaware of the opportunities to be involved with council services and supports people to engage with each other and develop new ideas, projects and activities within their communities. This approach enables people to get involved or express their views on a wide range of council services, policies or practices in a more informal way

Activities	Aim
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Door knocking • Pop up or mini events • Questionnaires' and surveys • Social media and online groups/meeting • Groups and activities • Events, art and culture • Fun days • Networking and workshops • Learning and training • Community led events and activities • Developing Neighbourhood Action Plans • Participatory budgeting, Estate Development Budget and Environmental Improvement Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure residents can participate in engagement activities that work for them • To build trusting relationships with local communities • To develop insight and understanding about communities and their priorities • To ensure residents can participate in engagement activities that work for them • To ensure residents can participate in engagement activities that work for them • To build trusting relationships with local communities

Responsive Engagement - this supports and enables services in the council to speak to residents through outward communication and feedback. This approach develops clearer understanding and actions on local priorities and can support communities to develop their own ideas, activities and services

Activities	Aim
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for services to consult and engage on specific issues • Provide area-based teams with Community Development partners to offer a complete package of engagement and development support to communities, neighbourhood groups residents, tenants and leaseholders • To provide engagement workshops, facilitation or events to engage communities in council services • To enable and support ward councillors to work with communities • To support the implementation of Neighbourhood Action Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a complete area-based offer for council services, ward councillors and residents to work together on identifying and responding to city wide and local issues • To provide a complete area-based offer for council services, ward councillors and residents to work together on identifying and responding to city wide and local issues

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Structural Engagement - this is the most formal engagement. It is often meeting based and it used to look at , council policy and practice.– This approach only appeals to some residents.

Activities	Aim
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to area based representative groups including LAT's, Neighbourhood Forums • Support to the Tenant and Leaseholder structures • Provide specific support to engage in • Support and develop the Tenant and Leaseholder grass roots groups • Provide guidance and support to the tenants and leaseholders • Ensure there are diverse and inclusive opportunities for involvement within these structures • To work with city wide communities of identity to engage them in neighbourhood working and tenant management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support communities to have a voice in the development of council and public services policy and practice • To ensure the council is delivering on its statutory duties to engage

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Appendix 3 - EDB Tables

Recommendations from 2018 EDB review

To be introduced in time for the 2020/21 EDB Programme	
1	Improve the information and guidelines for residents making EDB bids, including information from Neighbourhood Action Plans and the new process for progressing with environmental improvements.
2	Offer applicants who want to know more about EDB and how to make bids appointments with officers.
3	Set up a separate EDB budget from the citywide allocation for Seniors' housing; to be trialled for one year.
4	Decisions on Seniors' bids to be made by the Sheltered Housing Action Group.
5	Bids for fencing to be restricted to communal areas.
6	Carry out a review of new fencing installations and repairs.
7	Introduce an improved online EDB application form.
8	Aim to increase the number of decision points in the EDB cycle for main bids, to at least two a year.
9	Increase the maximum value of quick bids from £750 to £1,000.
10	Reduce the number of EDB Panel meetings from 10 to 6 per year.
11	Performance on the EDB programme to be reported twice yearly, including an end of year report.
12	Improve communications between the council and applicants at each stage of the EDB cycle.
Requiring further work	
13	Consider setting up a 'community chest' for community wellbeing projects funded from the grants to residents' associations' budget as it is regularly underspent.
14	Review maximum value of bids, for anticipated reduction of funding in 2021/22.
15	Review the decision making body for EDB bids.
16	Review how EDB funding is split between areas and/or property types.

Table One: Implemented changes to the EDB program

1.	<p>Improve the information and guidelines for residents making EDB bids, including information from Neighbourhood Action Plans.</p>	<p>An applicant guide has been produced which outlines what can and cannot currently be funded through EDB, with examples of each type of bid under each criterion.</p> <p>A new bid evaluation criteria has been produced (available in the appendixes), which the EDB panel refer to when voting on bids. This will be available for bidder's reference when completing applications.</p> <p>Bids for projects which benefit council residents on land owned by other parts of the council are considered for EDB funding, providing they have permission from the relevant directorate.</p> <p>Four Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs) have been published (East Brighton, Hangleton and Knoll, Moulsecoomb and Bevendean, and Portslade). Where appropriate, information from Neighbourhood Actions Plans will be used to inform residents when designing EDB projects, and will be taken into consideration when deciding upon EDB bids.</p>
2.	<p>Offer applicants who want to know more about EDB and how to make bids appointments with officers.</p>	<p>Residents can have appointments in person or over the phone with their local Community Engagement Officer (CEO) or the EDB Assistant to discuss EDB generally, to receive information on how to make bids, and to find out information on local community groups/associations which can offer further support in their application.</p>
3.1	<p>Set up a separate EDB budget from the citywide allocation for Seniors' housing, to be trialled for one year.</p>	<p>During the last EDB panel review meeting in March 2020, it was agreed that EDB would not be split between citywide and Seniors' Housing for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A new clear process and criteria for bidding and evaluating bids has been developed and all bidding needs to remain in line with this for equity. b. The budget split for Seniors' Housing based on the proportion of properties would be £26,500 per annum (8% of £320,000). This would limit the number of main bids to two per year for Seniors' Housing city-wide.
3.2	<p>Decisions on Seniors' bids to be made by the Sheltered Housing Action Group.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> c. The issue of age being a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 was considered at our last meeting, and questions raised as to the extent to which if Seniors' receive a separately controlled part of the budget, then why would

		<p>this not be available to other protected groups across the city.</p> <p>d. It was also raised that people with protected characteristic may have greater needs than others, so to split the budget by population data did not seem a sophisticated method.</p>
4.	Bids for fencing to be restricted to communal areas.	<p>This has been implemented.</p> <p>Individuals in need of fencing need to contact Housing Customer Services and will be advised on a case-by-case basis.</p>
5.	Introduce an improved online EDB application form.	<p>An online application form was introduced in June 2019, however, the application form had several issues.</p> <p>Most notably, the questions on the online application form did not require bidders: to outline how their bid will improve the quality of life of council tenants; to detail thoroughly how they have consulted with other residents; or to consider how they will evaluate success of their project.</p> <p>This meant that many of the applications did not appropriately meet key social value and evaluation criteria, which was highlighted as a crucial element in the EDB Audit 2017-2018.</p> <p>It was also requested that residents can use the form as a 'work in progress' as they complete different stages of the application. However, this was not an available feature which led to some confusion and frustration.</p> <p>Therefore, the online application has been closed until the questions can be changed to adequately reflect the social value criteria.</p>
	Defining the clear differences between spend from the Environmental Improvement Budget (EIB) and the EDB.	<p>The two funds are complimentary we have implemented a process to link any unsuccessful EDB bids to be passed to EIB if appropriate.</p> <p>To also look at funding separate parts of a single project using both funds to provide both capital and revenue.</p> <p>We will be producing communications to promote both funds and how to use them either separately or jointly.</p>
6.	Review the value of main bids. Increase the maximum value of quick bids	<p>As the amount of money available for EDB has not significantly reduced, the main bid maximum value will remain at £10K.</p> <p>The maximum value of quick bids has been raised to, and remains at, £1,000 per bid.</p>

	from £750 to £1000.	
7.	Reduce the number of EDB Panel meetings from 10 to 6 per year.	This has been implemented. The panel now meets on the last Wednesday of May, July, September, November, January, and March.
8.	Improve communications between the council and applicants at each stage of the EDB cycle.	Bidders are now notified and acknowledged when their application is received, they are informed on the outcome of their bids, and they are given a follow-up on reasons for the outcome of their bid by the Community Engagement Team.
9.	Decision making – how are bids decided upon?	The review group felt that the way of deciding on EDB bids encouraged 'Eurovision Syndrome' where residents voted for bids based on familiarity rather than the quality of bids. Community Engagement Team have now introduced an evaluation framework that the EDB panel, and those who attend the end of year EDB Area Panel, will use to judge bids. This will help to mitigate the possibility of residents voting on bids due to familiarity with the bidder, it will offer a 'paper-trail' of how decisions were made, and will act as further guidance for bidders when completing their application.
10.	Evaluation of EDB	From April 2021, an end of financial year report will be produced. This will involve all stakeholders of the year's program and will include: the number of bids, what was funded, impact, and changes needed to the guidelines for the following financial year. This evaluation will also include qualitative information on how residents have measured the social value of their projects.

Changes requiring implementation

3.1 There were further changes discussed during the EDB review that have yet to be made.

1.	Changes to capital only EDB projects	EDB funding is not restricted to capital work. Allow for revenue projects, to be funded from EDB.
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4.	Review the decision-making body for EDB	<p>Further work is needed to develop methods of widening the decision-making processes of EDB.</p> <p>It is proposed that the EDB panel with co-opted reps from the current task and finish group continue to work on options that form part of wider consultation e.g. through Homing-In and the Council's online consultation portal to move towards a wider 'participatory budgeting' style voting system, to be approved by Housing Committee before implementation.</p>
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3.2 Table 3: Changes to the use of funds which require Area panel approval

1.	A clear definition between an 'improvement' and 'repair/redecoration'	<p>The EDB stipulates that the fund is to be used for an 'improvement' to estates.</p> <p>Area Panel we define the definition between a repair, maintenance and an improvement to elevate the current confusion.</p>
2.	Review how EDB funding is split between areas and/or property types	<p>The annual EDB fund is split between the 4 areas according to the number of properties in each area. This does not take into account the amount of common land, property types, the need for improvements, and historic spend.</p> <p>The EDB panel, with the current task and finish group need to continue to work of options for the funding split, which will be reviewed and approved by Area Panel.</p>
3.	Increase the number of bid cycles	<p>The review group have advised that the long timescale between a bid being approved, and the project delivery has led to a loss of faith in the council.</p> <p>To mitigate this, the main bid cycle should be increased to two per year (with the main bid funding for the financial year being split into two rounds). The deadlines for applications would be January to be voted on in April, and July to be voted on in October.</p> <p>There was a significant underspend in the West and North areas on main bids for the financial year 20/21 and having a second bidding round in October 2020 to spend the remaining funds would be beneficial as a 'test-run'.</p>

4.	Ongoing costs	<p>The current EDB guidelines stipulate that an EDB bid cannot incur ongoing costs. However, this creates limitations to certain projects, such as the installation of Wi-Fi in community rooms.</p> <p>A review of this would allow groups to bid for an amount of money which could be split over a period of time in order to facilitate a broader range of projects.</p>
5.	Evaluation process	<p>Work needs to be done on reinstating the 'Resident Inspectors' programme to tie in with the end of year evaluation report, reviewing the delivery of some projects and meeting with residents who have engaged with the EDB process.</p> <p>This needs to be designed by the EDB panel, with the current task and finish group, and reviewed and approved by Area Panel.</p>

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