

# Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee

## Agenda Item 15

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Report of the Innovation Group on resident involvement</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>4 September 2012</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director - Place</b>		
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All		

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report shares with Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee the work and final proposals of the Innovation Group.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee endorse the final report of the Innovation Group and its suggestions for broadening the reach and outcomes of resident involvement.

#### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 This report follows a report to Housing Management Consultative Committee on 30 April 2012 which made that committee aware of the draft Innovation Group report and plans for further resident consultation on the proposals. This final report updates the draft version in light of the findings from the consultations that have taken place at the May City Assembly, through meetings with individual residents, and through Homing In.
- 3.2 The Innovation Group has met largely weekly between November 2011 and April 2012 to look at ways that resident involvement can be widened to include as many residents who wish to contribute to their housing management service in ways that they prefer. The group also sought to make practical proposals on how to modernise our approaches to involvement while strengthening support for tenant and resident associations (TRAs). The suggestions scattered throughout the report, which is attached as Appendix 1 of this report, are designed to achieve this. The full report

contains a summary within the first few pages, and the main suggestions are brought together on page 7.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The Innovation Group presented its interim work and proposals to, and received feedback from, the following meetings:
- Area Panels - Feb 2012
  - Tenant Compact Monitoring Group - March 2012
  - A meeting of Chairs and Secretaries of TRAs - March 2012
  - A meeting of managers of the housing service - April 2012
  - A meeting of councillors on HMCC - April 2012
  - City Assembly - May 2012
  - Area Panels - August 2012
- 4.2 A focus group of young tenants was undertaken as part of the Innovation Group's work.
- 4.3 The findings and suggestions of this group were presented at City Assembly in May, where residents had further opportunities to feed back on this work in break out groups.
- 4.4 Wider resident consultation and awareness raising was achieved via Homing In, by contacting residents on our residents involvement database and by making information available on our website.

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The costs of broadening involvement and achieving the suggested improvements will need to be managed from existing resources within the 2012/13 Housing Revenue Account budget.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks*

*15<sup>th</sup> August 2012*

##### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Innovation Group's report includes a number of suggestions which could be implemented without any formality. Others may require formal approvals. For example, changes to the Area Panels' terms of reference may need approval from the Policy and Resources Committee, as the Council's constitution provides that the terms of reference of the Panels are subject to

review by that Committee. It is not considered that any individual's human rights are adversely affected by the report.

*Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley*

*23<sup>rd</sup> August 2012*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The Innovation Group has considered equalities aspects of resident involvement throughout its work, and the key objective of all the suggestions when taken together is to increase the ability for all residents to be involved in ways that are suitable to them. There are also proposals to increase training opportunities for all residents as opposed to it being limited to members of TRAs, as is the current practice. An equalities impact assessment will be carried out on the final suggestions and reported to Housing Committee.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The groups report seeks to modernise the framework and practice of resident involvement, putting it on a more sustainable footing, and the suggestions contribute to supporting and strengthening sustainable communities. The proposed improvements, for example regarding communications, use of social media, using videos to counterbalance our over-reliance on the printed word, and reduced administration of Area Panels, all contribute to more environmentally sustainable working practices too.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Successful resident involvement can help reduce perceptions of fear of crime, and reduce antisocial behaviour within neighbourhoods.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The proposal for a new resident involvement framework creates the opportunity for higher levels of resident satisfaction with their landlord. It also minimises the risk of resident involvement (while having its successes) being perceived as the being the premise of a small minority of residents and providing poor value for money.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Any improvements to our resident involvement framework will be in line with the councils Community Engagement Framework, and will contribute to the development of neighbourhood councils.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1. Everyone Counts: Innovation Group report – August 2012 (78 pages)

**Documents In Members' Rooms**

1. None

**Background Documents**

1. None

# **Everyone counts**

**Innovation Group report into  
strengthening resident involvement**

**August 2012**

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Gratitude is expressed to the residents on the Innovation Group for their labour intensive work and innovative suggestions for making significant improvements to resident involvement for both residents and the housing service. They are:

Chris Kift, Linda Shaw, Dave Murtagh, Julie Nichols,  
Sam Murphy and Amal Basta.

Equal gratitude is extended to all our extremely hardworking tenant and leaseholder representatives for their longstanding, sustained and continued commitment to resident involvement.

August 2012

## Summary

Resident involvement encompasses a range of activities and processes that enable residents to have influence over their housing services if they wish to, with the benefits including improve services, higher resident satisfaction, increased accountability, increased sense of community and better relationships for all. It is acknowledged that responsibility for decision making rests with the council, as part of it's responsibilities to everyone in the city.

The Audit Commission advised, in 2006, that housing organisations should have clear evaluated objectives for resident involvement, should offer choice of involvement mechanisms, be able to show the benefits and impacts versus true costs, and should stop activities that offer little benefit and focus more on those that offer win-win solutions both to residents and to the organisation. This advice, along with the expectations of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and the Homes and Communities Agency's standards for resident involvement have shaped the work and proposals of the Innovation Group. The group was set up in late 2011 to look at how we can further enhance opportunities for residents to be involved in the design, delivery and monitoring of housing services – in ways that suit them.

The highly valued work of the proportionately small numbers of residents involved in our 72 tenant and resident associations (TRAs) lies at the foundation of our successful resident involvement framework. Their commitment to involvement remains extremely high, however attendance at their meetings is fairly low – even though between 9% and 14% of residents are members of a TRA. We are also aware that particular groups eg young residents, BME tenants, and those with young families are very much under-represented in these numbers.

Key to increasing the numbers of people involved in TRAs is to initially promote their work – increasing information about what they do, and also understanding and overcoming the barriers to involvement and providing mechanisms that chime with residents' interests. Some of the barriers include time, lack of confidence to participate, and off-putting or unwelcoming behaviours that are sometimes witnessed. The Innovation Group has considered a revised Code of Conduct to help with this last point and to encourage positive relations.

The Area Panel process was evaluated by the group and several issues of concern were noted, eg elections to groups from a small pool of dedicated and committed tenant reps, heavy administration, political charring, and possibly being able to provide better value for money. Suggestions for improvement include a re-assessment of the purpose of Area Panels, realignment of panels with ward and housing management areas, a greater focus on city-wide or area issues, and the removal or rethinking of the 'Blue Page' process with routine repairs issues reported through established mechanisms.



Also supporting resident involvement is a range of around 20 working groups, whose membership is largely restricted to elected tenant representatives, leaving little opportunity for involvement by residents who are interested in a topic but not members of a TRA. It also means that some individual tenant representatives sit on more than 10 groups. Our survey results indicate that between 86% and 91% of residents are not involved in a local TRA.

The Innovation Group proposes a new resident involvement framework which aims to increase participation and representation, enable people to be involved as they prefer, modernise our approach to involving residents, and enables us to evaluate and learn from successes. Within this framework there would be three key working groups (Service Improvement Groups) that directly match the service areas against which the housing service is both regulated and performance managed. They are:

- Home
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and community

As well as our existing citywide groups (eg Sheltered Housing Action Group and Tenants' Disability Forum), there will also be two service-wide groups directly matched to areas against which the service is regulated. They are:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment
- Value for money.

Membership to the groups would be open to all residents to widen participation and increase the breadth of experience and ideas, with 60% for elected tenant representatives. Each group might have sub groups within them. The majority of working groups would come to an end, and those remaining will have revised terms of reference and some new membership to include residents who want to make a contribution, are interested in the topic, but cannot commit an increased amount of time.

The proposed framework also includes a wider menu of options for involvement (including training), revisions to Area Panels, additional support and training for TRAs, a tenant led scrutiny panel, and increased working within the council wide community engagement framework.

As a late request, the Innovation Group considered proposals for Housing Management Consultative Committee in the context of wider council changes to the committee system. Some initial thoughts for improvement include less formal and more collaborative meetings with greater opportunity for residents' contributions to shape policy through eg tenant only indicative vote and involvement of 'expert' residents from the proposed Service Improvement Groups. Webcast or podcast meetings and invitations extended to other housing service customers were also suggested.

The Innovation Group undertook a focus group involving young people and highlights from it are reported here, along with suggestions for increased

involvement of young people. There is also information about plans for separate work with a local BME community group to counteract the under-representation of BME residents.

A draft menu of involvement for formatting into accessible and engaging promotional material is appended to the report.

Communications amongst residents and between the council and residents has been looked at, as well as the opportunities for using social media to broaden communication and increase participation. This could be achieved for example, with the use of TRA Facebook accounts and web pages; officer and TRA produced Youtube videos; sharing key points from meetings on the website or through using tweets; and having posts within TRAs specifically responsible for communications and social media.

The provision of training opportunities can make a significant difference to the success of resident involvement, and a draft training offer for all residents is appended. Suggestions also include some mandatory training for tenant representatives, working with colleagues and local partners to provide a broader range of workshops, and staff and residents working together to facilitate workshops or deliver training sessions.

The report concludes with a section on measuring the impact and value for money of all aspects of resident involvement in order to understand effectiveness. It outlines some of the measures that can be used, and key questions that will help assist the process.

There has been wide consultation around the proposals in this report through Area Panels, Housing Management Consultative Committee, the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group, City Assembly, staff meetings, Homing In and through contact with residents on our resident involvement database. The feedback from those consultations has been used to produce this final version of the report.

## **Jargon buster**

BME	Black and minority ethnic
RIO	Resident Involvement Officer
EDB	Estate Development Budget
HMCC	Housing Management Consultative Committee
HRAG	High Rise Action Group
LAT	Local Action Team
SHAG	Sheltered Housing Action Group
TCMG	Tenant Compact Monitoring Group
TDN	Tenant Disability Network
TPAS	Tenant Participation Advisory Service
TSA	Tenant Services Authority
TRA	Tenant and Resident Association
VFM	Value for money

'Resident' refers to both tenants and leaseholders

## Summary of main suggestions

If approved, then a detailed 'SMART' action plan will be worked up.

No.	Suggestion
<b>Code of conduct</b>	
1	Adopt revised code of conduct with clear explanation of expected and unacceptable behaviours
2	Reassess need for TCMG in light of changed legislation, RI strategy, and a Service Improvement Group dedicated to all resident involvement matters.
3	Prepare descriptions of the role, time commitments and expectations of TRA positions and support available, and make them available to people in the area of benefit who could be interested in helping or joining their TRA
4	CRB checks to be linked to certain responsibilities in the association - eg work with money or children
5	Some essential training for TRA Chairs and other positions in order to provide support and skills needed
6	Establish a separate body (eg 'Joint Adjudication Panel') to deal with some code of conduct breaches
<b>Tenant and resident associations (TRAs)</b>	
7	TRA aims clearly stated and community initiatives publicised to encourage more involvement and support achievement of objectives - eg role for social media support
8	Review of TRA constitutions to accord with the modernised framework, and clarity over which clauses can be TRA specific.
9	Annual impact assessments for TRAs
10	TRA training – some compulsory, and induction for new TRAs
11	List of members to be kept to help communications and activity to increase involvement, and to potentially help with equalities data
12	Increase local meetings without officers present by supporting and enabling TRAs to become more self reliant
13	Support increased community events and projects to bring people together, reduce isolation, enhance community spirit and make use of community assets and community space in a sustainable way
<b>Area Panels</b>	
14	Re-energise Area Panels - terms of reference, purpose of, format. Consider regrouping panel areas to match tenancy management and ward areas
15	Remove or improve Blue Pages and Tenant Only Meeting processes to avoid duplication and poor value for money

16	Share issues of citywide interest arising from Area Panels
17	Keep Area Panel focus on area rather than individual issues, and consultation/information on citywide issues. Also seek the involvement of other services (although paying mind to other local area meetings)
<b>Scrutiny</b>	
18	Adopt proposals as set out in Appx 4a - d
<b>Resident involvement framework and working groups</b>	
19	Adopt the three service improvement groups within which working groups will sit. Most working groups to come to an end subject to discussions within those groups. Where the group or elements of its work needs to continue, revised terms of reference to be drawn up to consider which one of the three Service Improvement Groups it best fits and to invite the participation of other residents
20	Establish two overarching groups for resident involvement and value for money with one or two representatives from the Service Improvement Group also sitting on these two groups that cut across the whole service
21	Inclusion of interested residents not involved in TRAs in working groups
22	Fixed time on groups
23	Annual impact assessment of groups
24	Encourage residents to look at work happening in other housing organisations.
<b>Involving young people</b>	
25	Obtain clarity on young people's preference for involvement by eg asking for their help, involving them in video production etc
26	Earmark a percentage of EDB money for ideas and suggestions from young people
<b>Menu of involvement</b>	
27	Prepare and publicise a menu of involvement to include establishing a 'Joint Adjudication Panel' – as per draft in report Appendix
<b>Communications and social media</b>	
28	Actions to improve communications eg greater publicity; training support and increase of use of new media especially videos to minimise overdependence on the written word
<b>Funding resident involvement</b>	
29	Ensure fair allocation of grants to support TRAs – eg possibly limiting each application to £1,000
30	Encourage and support external bidding for funds for TRA initiatives
31	EDB – look to ensure currently under-represented tenants and those with no TRA are able to suggest proposals for EDB spend

<b>Resident training</b>	
<b>32</b>	Make more use of the training budget, offering a wider range of training to tenant reps and residents
<b>33</b>	Include workshops to increase confidence and life skills in training offer – eg money matters
<b>34</b>	Use a range of resources – eg local organisations, government funded offers, e-learning, staff and residents run workshops
<b>Annual impact assessments</b>	
<b>35</b>	Ensure all aspects of resident involvement have clear objectives against which impact can be assessed
<b>36</b>	Conduct annual assessments, document and learn from findings

## Residents' feedback on main suggestions

All 144 responses from City Assembly (40) and Homing In (104)

(Note: not all respondents answered all questions)

	Suggestion	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
1	Change <b>code of conduct</b> to clearly explain unacceptable behaviours and possible actions if not followed	<b>125</b> 87%	<b>10</b> 7%	<b>7</b> 5%
2	Create an independent ' <b>Joint Adjudication Panel</b> ' of officers and residents, trained to mediate or hear appeals if Code of Conduct is not followed	<b>109</b> 76%	<b>20</b> 14%	<b>14</b> 10%
3	<b>Support TRAs to explain their roles</b> and what they aim to achieve, in order to encourage people's involvement	<b>123</b> 85%	<b>15</b> 10%	<b>4</b> 3%
4	Support TRAs with better <b>training and induction</b> – some necessary training	<b>121</b> 84%	<b>13</b> 9%	<b>6</b> 4%
5	Have a <b>TRA membership list</b> to help with communications	<b>105</b> 73%	<b>21</b> 15%	<b>11</b> 8%
6	Encourage people who might not be involved in a tenants association to be <b>involved in other ways</b>	<b>103</b> 72%	<b>26</b> 18%	<b>9</b> 6%
7	More support for <b>community events</b> and projects	<b>116</b> 81%	<b>17</b> 12%	<b>8</b> 6%
8	Re-energise and re-focus <b>Area Panels</b> , and share citywide news better	<b>85</b> 59%	<b>40</b> 28%	<b>14</b> 10%
9	Review <b>working groups</b> and link them to the housing service's 5 main work areas, (ie Tenancy, Home, Neighbourhood, Involvement , Improvement)	<b>91</b> 61%	<b>33</b> 23%	<b>15</b> 10%
10	Make sure important actions and <b>decisions made in key groups are shared</b> with tenant reps and others	<b>118</b> 82%	<b>18</b> 12%	<b>5</b> 4%
11	Publicise more widely the ways all residents can get involved – <b>menu of options</b>	<b>118</b> 82%	<b>15</b> 10%	<b>9</b> 6%
12	Allocate some <b>EDB</b> money for suggestions from <b>young residents</b>	<b>80</b> 56%	<b>29</b> 20%	<b>30</b> 21%
13	Provide the opportunity for <b>all residents to benefit from training opportunities</b> and workshops	<b>104</b> 72%	<b>16</b> 12%	<b>7</b> 5%
14	Regularly assess the work carried out by working groups, TRAs, etc to <b>show successes and evaluate progress</b>	<b>115</b> 80%	<b>14</b> 10%	<b>11</b> 8%

## Introduction

Resident involvement in Brighton and Hove has a well established history amongst residents living in council owned housing. They have been involved in a wide range of issues from helping to select our long term partnering contractor, to making local decisions about how a proportion of estate development funding on items or events to benefit their local area, and to deciding what their quarterly reporting of performance information will look like. The council has statutory and regulatory responsibilities to involve tenants in the provision of its housing service, and also has wider responsibilities to all residents of Brighton and Hove in the provision of local public services including city-wide and strategic housing issues, and to involve them in this.

Some examples of local issues affecting tenants and leaseholders as well as residents in other housing sectors in the city are housing provision and supply, impacts of the welfare benefit reforms, and local access to work and learning opportunities. In its local decision-making processes, the council will generally hear differing views and perspectives of the various resident and business communities in the city, and it has to balance these views when ultimately making decisions for which it remains responsible and accountable.

With these thoughts in mind, the then Cabinet Member for Housing (now Chair of Housing Committee) wanted to be sure we were doing our very best to work with residents to involve them in their housing services. Achieving this would necessitate keeping the best bits of, but making a shift from the traditional tenant participation models of the 1970s and 1980s which was rather characterised by paternalistic landlords doing their best *for* and *to* residents. The desired and fresher approach, which models the concepts of co-production and co-regulation, is characterised by an enabling landlord working with residents to provide efficient and effective services. As one respondent to the questionnaire put it:

“The sooner we are all dragged into the 21<sup>st</sup> century the better. We must get rid of this old fashioned ideas....and go on to a more democratic system.”

## Background to the Innovation Group

The Innovation Group was set up late in 2011 to look at how resident involvement could be further improved to include a wider number of people in their housing service in more ways that suit them, and to strengthen the impact that resident involvement has on decision making and monitoring processes.

The idea for setting up the group was endorsed at Housing Management Consultative Committee, and elections for the tenant representative positions



were initially held at Tenant Compact Monitoring Group, but were later re-held at each of the four Area Panels. The group's Terms of Reference can be seen at [Appx 1](#).

The group consists of longstanding involved residents, residents who are not currently involved, the Cabinet Member for Housing, and officers. It had met largely weekly for almost six months, reviewing one topic at a time, and looking at practice from other organisations.

## **Consultation and consultation findings**

The Innovation Group has regularly consulted on and taken soundings about its work. It presented its interim findings to Area Panels and took feedback in February 2012, and then returned to the Area Panels in August with the results of consultation that had taken place. It has also met with tenant and resident association committee members to feed back on its further findings and to consult with them before its draft report and recommendations were presented to Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) in April 2012. Further consultation on the proposals was carried out at City Assembly in May 2012, where a wider resident audience were able to contribute to the finer detail of the proposals in five break out groups, and make further suggestions. There was also a survey at the City Assembly for attendees to complete.

The questionnaire used at City Assembly was also used for wider resident consultation through the summer edition of *Homing In*.

As the table earlier in this report shows (page 10), there was overwhelming support for the main proposals that have emerged from the Innovation Group's work. The highlights from the findings are:

- The highest area of support was for changes to the Code of Conduct – with almost 18 times as many people agreeing than disagreeing.
- The lowest area of support was for a proportion of the Estate Development Budget to be decided upon by young people. Despite this, almost 3 times as many people agreed with it than disagreed.
- The main area of uncertainty was about re-energising and re-focusing the Area Panels – however 6 times as many residents were in support of this than were against it.
- The other main area of uncertainty was around the working groups, with 23% not being sure of the recommendation. Interestingly though, again, 6 times as many residents were in support of this than were against it.

There has been some concern expressed by existing tenant representatives about whether the proposals of the Innovation Group would weaken the representative role of tenant reps, and concern that involved residents should

be elected in order to have a mandate to represent other residents. There has also been comment about the wisdom of trying to 'fix something that ain't broke'. While these concerns are understood, it would be doing a disservice to all local tenants and leaseholders, and to the tenant movement itself, if we didn't acknowledge that people do want choice. It is true also that some people want the choice not to be involved and just want to be left in peace to live their lives. However for those who want to have a say, or to contribute, but don't want or can't afford the time for the ongoing commitment that some others can afford, we need to offer alternatives. By being involved and taking an interest, it doesn't always mean that people need to represent other people - they may be interested in representing themselves and using their own democratic voice, and may well not be interested in talking on behalf of others. They may have lots of skills or ideas to contribute, or might be interested in finding out more, or learning about our processes or their local community. There is enough work to go round, and there is room for residents who have a very important representative role to work productively alongside those who might only be interested in a specific subject or area – eg grounds maintenance or growing projects.

The Housing Quality Network is a national housing organisation that provides guidance, support and accreditation etc to the housing sector. It asserts that for organisations to obtain accreditation in the area of resident involvement, they have to demonstrate (amongst other things) that they offer tenants the opportunity to move through different levels of involvement; take a proactive approach to involving a representative cross section of people, make efforts to involve people who don't usually come forward, take their views into account, and regularly assess the impact of what they do. The suggestions from the Innovation Group were not made for reasons of achieving any accolades or accreditations, but simply because they make sense if we are seeking to strengthen involvement in residents' housing service and want to take an inclusive approach to this.

It seems that during the consultations, and with the debates and discussions that have taken place, most concerns have been addressed, and there is acknowledgement that residents don't necessarily want one thing or another - they want a mix and want the choice. It is our expectation that with everyone's goodwill and with learning from those who adopt different approaches to us, we will achieve even better heights than we have in the past and have an even more productive, vibrant and participatory involvement structure of which we can all be proud.

## **What resident involvement is**

Resident involvement is a mix of the set up, processes, people, activities and resources that go into hearing from, involving, working with and understanding residents; and enabling them to have more influence over their housing services if they want to.

Our aim for resident involvement is to provide a wide range of opportunities for as many people as possible, which enable them to participate and influence decision making at a time and at a level that is suitable to them.

## **Benefits of resident involvement**

- Helps identify and then meet the needs of residents
- Improved services and higher satisfaction
- More accountability
- Better informed staff and residents
- Enable residents to have a voice
- Increased sense of community
- Increased individual and community confidence
- Increase ability for community to build capacity
- Creates better relationships for all

## **Audit Commission advice**

The Audit Commission handbook “Improving Services through Resident Involvement” offers the following advice:

1. Have a clear purpose for involvement and evaluate against the objectives - ie ask the ‘Why?’ question.
2. Provide choice, offer a menu of options.
3. Show the benefits of involvement eg through service reviews.
4. Share information about the true costs of involvement, along with the impact it has on rents or organisational efficiency, so that tenants can help make better value for money choices eg suggest better approaches - ie ask the ‘So what?’ question
5. Stop resident involvement activities with unclear benefits or impacts
6. Focus on activities that give maximum value to both the organisation and to tenants – ie aim for win-win solutions.

Although this advice is from before the TSA and the Homes and Communities standards, it still holds true today, as is reflected in the work undertaken and that follows in this report.

The suggestions from the group result from research into other organisations, discussions within the group, and importantly **thoughts** from other residents that have been stated at various meetings and brought together here.

## **Context of resident involvement**

The Tenant Services Authority's (TSA) 'Involvement and Empowerment Standard' against which housing organisations can be measured, remains a strong feature of the Homes and Communities Agency's new regulatory framework. Examples of expectations from the standard include:

- offering choice
- focus on customer service
- meeting the diverse needs of tenants
- developing resident led scrutiny as a method of co-regulation
- promoting Neighbourhood Councils and Tenant Management Organisations.

The aims of our Resident Involvement Strategy developed in 2011 are to:

1. Provide a wider range of opportunities for residents to be involved
2. Develop a framework for involve residents in service pledges (local offers
3. Involve residents in the development of housing policy and the design and delivery of housing services.
4. Involve residents in monitoring and scrutinising our performance in delivering housing services

The work of the Innovation Group attempts to take this a stage further by making suggestions for modernising our overall framework and approaches to resident involvement.

### **Resident involvement survey of all residents**

In December 2009, we carried out an involvement survey to understand why more residents were not involved in their local tenant and resident association (TRA) and to gauge people's interest in being involved in their housing service or local area. The survey was sent to every tenant and leaseholder along with their Homing In magazine, and 2,091 responses were returned.

From that survey, 9% of respondents were active members of a local TRA, 74% had never been a member of a TRA, and the remaining were either non-active or were ex-members. Some of the reasons given for not being involved included not knowing what they are, not knowing about their local association or meeting times, a feeling that they were not representative of local people or not for people like them, and not feeling comfortable there. Other responses did include begin happy about what TRAs do and therefore not needing to get involved, not having the time, or simply not being interested.

A further interesting finding from this survey was that 1,800 people (or 86%) were interested in being involved in their housing service in some way, and wanted their details to be kept on our resident involvement database for being involved about other involvement opportunities.

The results of the survey were reported to the May 2010 HMCC, and the committee approved widening the ways in which interested people can become more involved in their housing service. The report stated that "...By so doing, we are better able to shape and deliver services having considered what matters most to as broad a range of residents as possible".

The survey also showed that there is an over-representation of older people in our resident involvement structure, and an under-representation of young tenants, tenants with young families, and BME tenants.

#### **Tenant satisfaction survey of a sample of residents**

From this survey of a random sample of approximately 3,000 residents in November 2011 we also know that:

1. 59% of residents are aware they have a local residents association in their area
2. 14% are members of a tenants and residents association
3. 56% of tenants have access to the internet
4. 62% satisfied with how housing generally listen to their views and acts on them.

Having a good insight into our residents, who they are, their preferences etc is useful for working out how resident involvement needs to be planned and delivered.

Tenant and resident associations perform a very important role as a channel for people to express their views, opinions, or concerns and be involved in their housing service. Each association holds local meetings, at which levels of attendance remain fairly static with only small numbers of new people attending.

Not everyone wants to attend meetings, lots of residents just want information and to be kept informed of what's going on. Other residents want to be involved in some way - and part of our challenge in creating fair opportunities for people to be involved is to harness their interest through information (see [Communication section](#)) and by offering a range of opportunities to meet people's interests, time commitments and needs (see [Menu of Involvement section](#)).

All forms of our involvement have relied on small numbers of key hardworking tenant and leaseholder representatives involved in TRAs, and recognition, training and support for them is crucial for their continued involvement and success. It is also important for us to consider the needs of new people who want to be involved and may need some encouragement (see draft [Training programme – Appx 5](#)), and those who currently are, or feel, excluded (see [Barriers to involvement section](#)).

It might also be that we need to be better about sharing information about the benefits of resident involvement and what impact it can have (see [Measuring the impact of resident involvement section](#))

TRAs will continue to play an important role in bringing local people together on matters of interest, and there is more we can do to connect with groups that already exist and that council residents are already involved with eg the Crew Club to hear from younger residents.

## **Barriers to resident involvement**

The reasons why some people choose not to be, or are not, involved in resident involvement is varied and can be multiple. They include:

1. Aversion or reluctance to attend meetings – except where an issue is of direct relevance and importance to them
2. Lack of confidence in attending public meeting
3. Lack of clarity about the aims and what people are trying to achieve
4. Cultural factors that can mean some involvement activities are not inclusive
5. Time – work or family/caring responsibilities
6. Disability
7. Language and literacy needs – there is often an over-reliance on the written word eg paper based questionnaires and reports or minutes at meetings
8. Perception of meetings for the sake of having a meeting
9. Culture of involvement for negative reasons which is reportedly off-putting to some people who would like more positive engagement

10. Perception that it won't lead to any changes, that it makes no difference
11. Perception that outcomes have already been decided
12. Poor conduct of some tenant representatives reportedly off-putting to some residents
13. Lack of a warm welcome on previous attempts to be involved
14. Timing of meetings, and the difficulties in satisfying the differing meeting time preferences for all groups eg working residents, those who are elderly or who have young families.

### **Suggestions to reduce the barriers**

1. Get the foundation right – ie making sure all residents have an equal opportunity to be involved in some way.
2. Make sure the menu of involvement and calendar of events are accessible to all – using different media
3. Explain better why people should join in and get involved. Publicise the goals, achievements and impacts of resident involvement to harness people's interest eg make notes from TRA minutes available on the Council's website(3 to 4 bullet points only)
4. Be clear about what decisions have already been made (if any) and where there is room for manoeuvre - or have clarity on the specific areas that are open for influence.
5. Talk to community groups of those least represented to understand barriers and possible solutions – support residents to do this too eg through training.
6. Help people develop the confidence to put themselves forward
7. Explore more fun ways to involve people, and more social events or activities, not just meetings.
8. Make more use of community rooms owned by the council
9. Introduce praise and recognition for those volunteering their time service to the community
10. Reduce the formality involved in tenant engagement activities
11. Use staff and residents to run training courses
12. Mix people up at the City Assembly
13. Use modern media, the phone or door knocking to reach people who won't respond to a leaflet or go to a meeting
14. Tap into where people go to eg contacting parents at the playground
15. Understand if people are involved for positive or negative reasons - respond to the negative factors, and use people's positive energies
16. Use different people to promote change
17. Involve all TRAs in generating ideas from everyone

## Code of conduct

With regard to resident involvement, a code of conduct is a set of guidelines that describes the way residents are expected to conduct themselves as residents participating in the involvement structure.

### Key concerns

1. There is some lack of clarity amongst some officers and tenant reps with regard to bullying, harassment and other inappropriate behaviour, and how it should be dealt with. There is also some evident reticence or limited confidence in responding to matters as they arise - particularly for behaviours outside of meetings.
2. Better use should be being made of the councils complaints procedure
3. Unprofessional and unacceptable conduct by some tenant reps - eg general insults and comments about officers by tenant reps in public gatherings are inappropriate and not acceptable. If there are specific complaints about an officer this has to be raised in the right way (eg to the line manager, or using the complaints procedure) and it will be investigated
4. Sanctions are slow to be applied to those behaving poorly (eg having to leave meeting, removal from tenant's association)
5. Model constitution needs revision to reflect the code of conduct and potential areas of conflict
6. Tenant Compact Monitoring Group's (TCMG) role in addressing code of conduct issues has not been effective or well developed

### Suggestions

1. Revise the code of conduct (see Appx 2). One respondent to the questionnaire commented that it would make more sense to talk about the behaviours that we do want rather than those that we don't want so that people are pointed 'towards the ideal solution and not the rubbish one.' These sentiments are shared, and the revised code of conduct does feature the desired behaviours, but includes the inappropriate behaviours for clarity.
2. Need for the role of TCMG to be reviewed in light of changed legislation
3. Before elections to TRA positions, a description of the job role or the expectations of the position should be made available to people in the area of benefit who could be interested
4. Clear explanation and list of unacceptable behaviour
5. Past criminal records should be part of the selection criteria for a treasurer and anyone dealing with the money of the association
6. The requirement for CRB checks should be linked to certain responsibilities in the association
7. Some training for TRA Chairs and other positions should be a requirement in order to provide support and skills needed. During the City Assembly



consultation it was mentioned that some training should be essential, and would help give more confidence to tenant representatives,

8. Separate body (eg 'Joint Adjudication Panel') to deal with some code of conduct breaches. The panel to...
  - Be independent of the participation structure
  - Have representation from residents and council
  - Be depoliticised
  - Have resident representation from outside existing groups and structures - ie not elected through the participation structure
  - Have council representation not necessarily from managers but other officers not involved with community participation
  - Be made up of an officer, a resident and possibly a colleague from another section drawn from a trained pool
  - Reflect council's policies and procedures.

## **Aspects of current resident involvement framework**

The list below gives the main elements of the existing involvement framework, and this section will look at each in turn.

- Individual informal involvement
- Tenant and resident associations
- Area Panels
- Tenant Compact Monitoring Group
- Working groups and common identity groups - eg Core Group, Sheltered Housing Action Group, Tenants Disability Network, High Rise Action Group, Leaseholder Action Group
- Housing Management Consultative Committee

### **1. Individual residents in informal consultations**

#### **Current situation**

This is a useful way residents can be involved, and can choose to participate without the need to necessarily attend formal meetings.

There have been a variety of surveys of residents that have been carried out over recent years eg postal questionnaires like the STATUS and recent STAR satisfaction surveys, or the Estate Development Budget (EDB) survey; questionnaires in Homing In or on the council's website like the Resident Involvement Survey; and surveys of specific groups eg of sheltered housing residents.

## Key issues

Residents need more options for being involved and sharing their views and ideas. There is the risk of consultation fatigue from repeatedly asking the same people – and therefore we need to cast wider.

## Suggestions

1. Publicity material is prepared to inform all residents of the various ways that they can be involved - the menu of involvement
2. Establish 'The 5 minute Group' - a group of residents willing to complete short telephone, text or web based surveys to provide a 'sounding board' for testing ideas, giving service feedback, making suggestions etc that can feed into the work of other groups.

## 2. Tenant and resident associations (TRAs)

### Context

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) describes a residents association as:

"A group formed by local people who join together to work for common aims... Although all groups are different, they do have common aims and objectives which can include identifying and trying to solve problems that affect tenants and residents, campaigning on a particular issue, organising community events and creating a sense of 'community spirit'

We have 72 TRAs. They are independent community organisations and have varying numbers of dwellings in their 'area of benefit'. Association committee members give freely of their time and have made important contributions to their local communities or to almost all areas of the housing service. Examples include running a growing project with young people; acting as an advocate for local residents; contributing to publications eg Tenancy Handbook, Resident Involvement Strategy and Repairs Handbook; selection and monitoring of our repairs partner; and service and policy suggestions through participating in working groups, Area Panels and HMCC.

The council values TRA commitment to resident involvement, and supports them by eg staff resources, our contract with the Resource Centre, the provision of some meeting rooms and the allocation of TRA grants.

Each TRA is able to apply to H&SI for funding for the running of their association for things like equipment, meeting room charges, newsletters etc. They are supported by Resident Involvement Officers (RIOs), and can access support from the Resource Centre for eg training, production of newsletters,

using equipment and resources there, getting advice on applying for external funding, and confirmation of financial accounts. They can also submit bids for EDB funding, which is allocated by voting at Area Panels, for communal area or community based projects. Some TRAs also do their own fund raising for local events.

The RIO support currently includes support and advice on setting up a TRA, arranging meetings, taking minutes at meetings, giving advice and information on housing or community engagement matters.

### **Key issues**

1. Throughout the consultations, some TRAs talked about the low numbers attending their meetings (eg 6 people and sometimes less) and not having enough help and support from local residents. This issue really lies at the heart of the Innovation Group's work, and begs questions around people's time availability, whether they see any benefit in going to meetings, and whether they might prefer something different.
2. Some residents have mentioned not being made to feel welcome at their local TRA, or that they feel the TRA is not representative of them, or that it is cliquy.
3. Some resident have commented about not knowing about their local TRA
4. Given the small numbers involved in some TRAs, it could be questionable how representative the TRAs are, and how able they are to canvass representative views within the locality.
5. Queries have been raised about the involvement of councillors who have active roles in some resident associations, where the associations are supposed to be politically neutral, and councillors are perceived to have a high level of power and influence.
6. Some TRAs experience difficulty in disseminating information to residents, and some residents have expressed that they are not kept informed by their TRA reps.
7. Varied access to training opportunities.
8. Ineffective use of RIO time eg in taking minutes. Residents could feasibly minute their own meetings – particularly if simply recording key decision or actions, which would give RIOs additional time to support TRAs in the various other ways suggested in this report.

### **Suggestions**

1. TRAs to rethink and state the reason why they have formed as a group, and what they aim to achieve (their objectives) over the coming year so that this can be locally publicised to encourage more involvement, and so that support for TRAs can be tailored to achieving these objectives.
2. Increase and encourage greater resident involvement in local TRAs by eg intergenerational topics for discussion and activities, dynamic meetings,

and knowing what local people might want in a TRA, and increasing communication and publicity about what they do. Feedback from residents suggested that positive stories should be promoted as people may be turned off from what they perceive as constant moaning and winging, and may be more interested in what they can positively contribute to their local community.

3. Review TRA constitutions to ensure they tie in well with suggestions from the Innovation Group's work, that there is clarity around clauses from the 'model' constitution that need to remain within any revised constitutions, and that they adequately cover issues regarding membership.
4. Training for TRA members – some of it to be compulsory eg managing inclusive meetings, equalities and diversity, secretary duties (eg taking and writing minutes), keeping accounts, role of the Chair etc, and some of it optional – eg organising community events, meetings that matter, bidding for funds, money matters, energy efficiency, ICT skills and new media.
5. Support TRAs to increase membership and have more roles within the association - eg with responsibility for communications, social media, fundraising, activities spread out amongst a wider group. Also for TRAs (as with the wider involvement framework) to acknowledge that some people might want involvement in
6. An induction plan for new TRAs and a review of the Tenant Association Representative Handbook to bring it up to date.
7. TRAs to keep a membership list, clearly knowing which residents are and are not members of their association to assist with communications and work to increase membership, and to help give more knowledge on diversity and equalities matters.
8. The tenant's voice is extremely important, and tenants could use the resources and people at their disposal to hold more TRA and local area meetings independent of the council (resident only meetings). If any housing queries or issues arose from it, the Chairperson or Secretary could contact the relevant officer for an early response. The thought here is also about the TRAs community focus and furthering their community related objectives.
9. Encourage and promote more community projects - eg enrichment or social projects. During the consultations residents mentioned a plethora of ideas they would be interested in eg street parties, surgeries, bowls, local model railway club, walking group, breakfast clubs, homework clubs, summer fetes, table top sales, making bird boxes, and activities that younger tenants can bring their children to for intergenerational activities. Other examples from residents groups here and elsewhere in the country include book groups, football, 'snack and chat' afternoons or evenings, estate clean up days, bartering or 'help your neighbour' website development (eg exchanging dog walking for help with preparing CVs), community gardening scheme, recipe sharing or food demonstrations, knitting clubs and netball or softball evenings. As well as harnessing support for local TRAs, these kinds of activities will also help combat feelings of isolation on our estates, and increase community spirit.

10. Carry out annual impact assessment of TRA achievements against objectives, acknowledging successes and targeting additional officer or community support where intentions have not been realised.

### 3. Area Panels

#### Context

We have four Area Panels in the city:

1. North and East      Oxford Street Housing Office
2. Central              Lavender Street Housing Office
3. West                  Victoria Road Housing Office
4. East                  Selsfield Drive and Manor Place Housing Office

The panels were set up to enable representatives of associations in the area to come together on matters of common interest, to consider joint solutions to issues, and to come together to participate in decisions on local or city wide housing policy and other matters.

Panels meet four times a year, with one meeting given to voting on the Estate Development Budget. Annually, at one meeting, election of tenant representatives to particular working groups or other standing groups takes place – meaning that membership to those groups is largely taken from Area Panel reps.

Reports are taken to, or presentations are made at, Area Panels and some examples of subject matters over the past year are:

- Capital works programme
- Allocation policy
- Results of resident surveys eg resident involvement survey, EDB survey
- Draft Neighbourhood Policies

Debate is held around the subject area and resident reps help decide together, bringing in their own views or views of the residents they represent.

Area Panels have provided a good formal framework for area based involvement and local participation, and contributes to decision making. However, there are areas where improvement could be made.

## Key issues

1. Election to almost all working groups is from a small pool of residents attending Area Panels.
2. Election from the small pool has led to an over reliance on some people who sit on a large number of groups – eg up to 13, and the difficulties that entails eg time to feed back to their residents on all the groups and therefore ability to be representative, ability to attend group meetings if they clash; difficulties in trying to arrange meeting dates that don't clash.
3. Duplication - eg the number of times the same repairs issues are reported at various meetings.
4. Political chairing - is this the best method? We've not seen it replicated much in other organisations (councils).
5. Individual cases are not always effectively reported or channelled through established routes before they get to Tenant Only meetings.
6. There is sometimes some frustration that matters raised are individual issues with no direct area-wide interest, a point repeated during the consultations.
7. With housing management areas being revised to match ward boundaries,, it might be useful do the same with Area Panels.
8. There is a considerable amount of administration required for each round of Area Panel meetings, particularly the '**Blue Pages**' process as follows:
  - Tenant only meetings are used to gather the 'Blue Page' questions, and are supported and administered by a paid for service through the Resource Centre
  - Blue page questions are typed up by Resource Centre staff and sent to CPOs
  - Each CPO circulates questions to the relevant person, team or council section for a response
  - Responses are checked and co-ordinated.
  - If ready, the responses then go to the Agenda planning meetings (attended by reps, CPO staff, managers and the councillor who chairs the meeting), where it is decided whether to then include it into the Area Panel agenda papers
  - Agenda papers are prepared and distributed.
9. The true total cost of administering Area Panels is not fully known. It might, or might not, provide good VFM, and will need to be considered.

### **Some benefits of the Blue Pages process are...**

- The tenants only meeting offers residents and opportunity to meet and discuss concerns without having officers present
- Enables issues that need attention to be publicly voiced

- Some individual property concerns that are raised might reflect wider concerns – eg problems with newly fitted door handles, or delays/quality of repairs.

### **Some of the flaws with the Blue Page process are...**

1. It is time consuming and labour intensive - and does not offer good value for money particularly if duplicating established processes for chasing a repair or making a complaint.
2. Some issues should not wait for a meeting that takes place every 3 months to be reported. Earlier reporting through established channels could lead to earlier resolution.
3. The supportive role of the TRA rep could be suitably demonstrated using the other channels.
4. Most of the issues relate to repairs
5. Some issues are repeated over time or over Area Panel areas and are not co-ordinated.
6. Several issues relate to individual properties and not the community as a whole.
7. Tenant only meetings could feasibly take place at any time with association secretaries or other members reporting any concerns to staff, or supporting tenants to use the existing channels – eg the chasing or complaints processes.

### **Suggestions**

1. Reconsider the terms of reference and purpose of Area Panels, re-energise them, and consider the format, while ensuring that they remain a strong voice for tenants. Some residents who were consulted were unaware of what the Area Panels were about, and some felt it had little connection with them - being unsure how their views were represented at such a forum or what was discussed.
2. Consider whether the Blue Pages and Tenant Only Meeting are needed and add value, and if so how to improve the process - eg by devising a flow chart to ensure that only relevant items make it to Area Panel. Or by having informal meetings of just residents where the Area Panel representatives then report any issues either through established channels for speedier and more effective resolution, support residents to make a complaint if they have one, and pass remaining area wide issues to the person administering Area Panels. The Area Panel process is fairly costly – at around £xxxx for each round of meetings, with the Blue Page process alone costing approximately £xxx for each panel, therefore there needs to be some certainty of the value this is adding.
3. Communicate issues arising from one Area Panel but of citywide interest (eg a repairs performance issue or response to door handle concerns) in

order to avoid duplication , through for example an information circular following each round of panels.

4. Consider any good practice lessons from the Housing Estates Forum eg multi-agency attendance.
5. Ensure Area Panels focus on area or citywide issues only rather than individual repair issues. This was also requested during the consultations.
6. People with individual issues could record them on slips of paper to be actioned by the council after the meeting. The meeting is then better able to focus on generic area or citywide issues.

#### **4. Working groups**

There are around 20 working groups that have been set up for specific areas of the service. Some are longstanding, and some could have really been 'task and finish' groups but they are still running.

#### **Key concerns**

1. Membership drawn from a small pool of people who do not well represent the profile of residents.
2. There appear to be too many groups with some duplication in terms of matters discussed - they could do with being appraised.
3. There is no route for people outside of the group to feed in views or get involved.
4. Some members of the groups sit on more than 10 groups, which can result in overload and a limited ability to pull in the views of people they represent.

#### **Suggestions**

1. All groups should be looked at to see if they have come to the end of the purpose for which they were established. Remaining ones would be reconstituted to match the proposed involvement framework suggested by the Innovation Group involving three main service improvement groups and the two other service-wide groups that match the TSA and local delivery unit governance framework, and that have sub groups sitting within each.
2. Managers responsible for the work of the relevant working group will consider its remit, and discuss its future status with residents sitting on that group at its next meeting.
3. Most groups will come to an end, and those that continue to draft terms of reference that can be used to consider which of the three Service Improvement Groups or two others it best fits.
4. The draft terms of reference will also be used to publicise the formation of the new groups and invite other residents who might be interested to participate. This will be in acknowledgement that some people, given the



choice, might prefer their involvement to be in bite-size chunks on eg 'task and finish' or 'top and tail' groups, without requiring any further obligation on their part.

5. Any future groups will be likely to form a sub group of the one of the five main groups.

## **5. Tenant Compact Monitoring Group (TCMG)**

The TCMG was established at the time when all local authority landlords were required to develop a Tenant Compact which served as an agreement or an accord on resident involvement between tenants and their landlord.

### **Key issues**

1. Tenant Compacts are no longer a statutory requirement and many landlords are now moving towards having a resident involvement strategy and action plan.
2. There is some duplication or confusion of matters discussed at TCMG and at Area Panels.
3. A large focus for TCMG of late is the planning for City Assembly, which could more effectively be managed by a smaller group of people.

### **Suggestions**

As with working groups mentioned above, the TCMG will look at its future purpose, and whether it would be reconstituted to match the proposed involvement framework involving five main service improvement groups that match the TSA and local delivery unit governance framework.

## **6. Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC)**

The Innovation Group was asked, through the recent governance report 'A new constitution for Brighton & Hove City Council' that went to Governance Committee on 20 March, to consider the future role of HMCC. (That report will go to Council on 26 April). The Innovation Group discussed this late in it's meeting schedule as it had not formed part of its terms of reference.

### **Key issues**

1. HMCC could provide an excellent platform for residents to be able to meet collectively, directly with councillors - but concern has been expressed that it is sometimes inappropriately used by some councillors and residents as

a political platform - for example with emotive language used of being either for or against tenant interests as if there was nothing in between or no other perspectives to consider.

2. Its effectiveness as a mechanism for consulting with residents is questionable.
3. Its appropriateness as a mechanism for consulting with residents is questionable where the larger body of residents may not feel adequately represented by resident on the committee, or where committee members may feel they are not adequately able to reflect the views of the wider tenant body on the matter under discussion.
4. There appears to be a lack of clarity regarding the part that consultation plays, as well as the ultimate decision-making responsibilities of councillors.

### Thoughts from the Innovation Group

1. Clarify the role of HMCC (or HMCSC) with all members of the committee, and the type of subjects/reports that need to be taken to this committee.
2. Conduct more collaborative and participative meetings, with increased opportunities for everyone present to contribute, and with better meetings etiquette.
3. Possibly have a less formal committee setting by holding the meetings in community buildings or at the Housing Centre.
4. If HMCSC remains at Hove Town Hall, alter the seating arrangements so that residents are at the centre. However it is acknowledged that the seating there does not easily lend itself to all participants being able to see each other.
5. Place residents at the heart of HMCSC, giving greater acknowledgement of their contributions to shaping policy by only residents having an indicative vote that is later considered by councillors on Housing Committee, along with other views and perspectives that councillors need to balance in their decision-making role.
6. Use the voting technology system (as used at Area Panels recently) so that voting remains independent and confidential.
7. Have residents from the proposed Service Improvement Groups and service-wide groups attend HMCSC - particularly to present reports to which they have contributed and on which they have become 'experts' or 'specialists'.
8. Consider the views of a wider group of residents – eg by having recommendations on reports supported by other forms of tenant consultation already undertaken to make it more representative. This is especially important given that only between 9% and 14% of residents are involved in a TRA.

9. Have accessible reports, with eg bullet point lists, or more presentations to highlight issues, implications and nuances of the topic under discussion.
10. Webcast or podcast proceedings.
11. Consider residents sitting on HMCSC having a pre-meet to discuss recommendations - or consider doing away with the need for a pre-meet because the nature of the meetings allow for debate and discussion that can be had collaboratively.
12. Consider extending invitations to other housing service customers who are currently not residents of council owned housing – eg applicants on the housing waiting list or other interested parties.
13. Put in place code of conduct reminders that show more regard for people, whether they are present or not, and that clarify acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.
14. Consider whether the chair needs to be a councillor.

<b>Summary of thoughts on HMCC</b>	
<b>1</b>	Re-state role, constitution and subject areas for HMCSC
<b>2</b>	Less formality, more collaboration, accessible reports, more presentations
<b>3</b>	Residents at the heart – with sole indicative votes using voter technology, and possible tenant pre-meet
<b>4</b>	Residents on Service Improvement Groups occasionally attend HMCSC as 'experts'/'specialists'
<b>5</b>	Hear wider tenant body's voice – eg use results of consultation
<b>6</b>	Invite non-tenant/leaseholder housing customers or future customers
<b>7</b>	Code of conduct reminders
<b>8</b>	Chair - councillor, resident or officer?

## A proposed new involvement framework

The proposed framework largely draws on points made in the previous sections and pulls them together into a structure for resident involvement. Please see Appx 3 for a diagram that represents the framework.

### Features of the proposed framework

1. Retain the strong TRA foundation - with more targeted support where this is wanted, and additional training opportunities.
2. Introduction of wider options for engagement, in support of or in addition to TRAs, to be well publicised and available for all residents.
3. Introduction of a scrutiny panel
4. A different engagement model based on the five Homes and Communities Agency regulatory framework and our commissioning priority areas:
  - a. Tenant involvement and empowerment
  - b. Home
  - c. Tenancy
  - d. Neighbourhood and community
  - e. Value for money
5. Three Service Improvement Groups linked to the three service areas above (ie home, tenancy and neighbourhood), with two service-wide groups for the remaining two (ie involvement and value for money).
6. Existing working groups to come to an end, with some reforming in a different guise or merging with others, and sitting within one of the three Service Improvement Groups or the service-wide groups, with new terms of reference, clear objectives, and opportunities for other residents to be involved.
7. Residents involved in only one Service Improvement Group, although there may be a number of sub-groups within each. As well as serving to widen participation, this will also address the issues of too many meetings, too many papers to read, and too many meeting clashes.
8. Widen involvement in working groups by have reps and non reps to sit on them on a 60/40 ratio.
9. Tenure on working groups to be time limited, with a 12 month break before re-sitting on the same group, if others are interested, to maximise opportunities for all.
10. Strengthening the link to local TRAs or 'grass roots' involvement, as well as to work towards the increased merging of tenant engagement work with the engagement of neighbouring residents in the owner occupied and private rented housing sectors.

11. Reason for involvement based on where people's interests lie, the skills they bring, or the knowledge and skills they wish to develop.
12. Yearly impact assessment of all groups and involvement activities to determine what has been gained by their work throughout the year, celebrate successes, and to evaluate value for money.

## **Tenant scrutiny**

### **Context**

Scrutiny is part of the TSA guidance - the drive for co regulation, the Duty to Involve, and a commitment of the Green Party manifesto.

The council's corporate cabinet system is returning to a committee system, and it is intended to introduce scrutiny as part of the new structure.

### **Innovation Group suggestions for establishing the Tenant Scrutiny Panel**

1. 10 - 12 people
2. Need different skills and experiences
3. Mix of one third existing reps and two thirds uninvolved residents
4. Representative – eg mix of ages, ethnicities
5. Open day for people interested to find out more
6. Informal recruitment - non intimidating selection against some criteria
7. Training and learning opportunities - eg in research, working as a group, performance issues, gathering information and evidence
8. Not consultation and engagement - real power to drill down to get the detailed picture, and make evidence-based recommendations
9. Housing Committee still the ultimate decision maker
10. Supported by the Councils Scrutiny Team (independent, experienced and not political), with the option of an independent mentor
11. Time limited positions for 2 years, but 3 years for the first group
12. Members replenished annually one third at a time following the initial tenure of approximately three years - or as required
13. Explore potential to work collaboratively with other local housing providers to share learning and skills once developed

Separate papers detailing proposals for scrutiny can be found at Appx 4a - d.

## **Involving young people**

### **The issues**

Young tenants and children of tenants form a large group of residents living in council properties, yet decisions regarding the service they receive are made largely without their involvement.

### **Key findings from focus group of young tenants**

1. Perceptions of landlord - kind, caring, authority, boundaries, rules, can punish, can offer help.
2. Perceptions on getting new home - happy, excited, difficult, needing lots of work to property, needing to acquire furniture etc, quick speed, pride, worry.
3. Useful information needed - how to furnish and unfurnished property on a budget, gas and electricity issues, repairs help, handyperson scheme eg for tenant with disabilities.
4. Image of TRAs - not found one, strength in numbers, working together.
5. Would want from a TRA - listen, help, advice, show you what to do, text about meeting dates, email with summary of minutes.
6. Meeting preferences - evenings, Saturday - food, transport, crèche
7. Communication preferences - internet, web, newsletters - although need more articles of interest to young people, up coming events not just past things.
8. Workshop ideas - Help with preparing a CV for help getting work, council, save money, save on energy bills, running community events, volunteering, DIY, healthy cooking on a budget.
9. Community ideas - quiz night, playgroup, coffee mornings, Christmas party.

### **Suggestions**

Encourage young people's involvement by for example:

1. Finding out what young people would prefer to do, what they need, what they'd like.
2. Asking for their help – eg in producing short film clips about their area or for the EDB programme, helping with TRA web pages, producing newsletters etc.
3. Using computer games designed by young people to encourage engagement.

4. Earmarking eg £50,000 or a percentage of EDB money for ideas and suggestions for spend from young people specifically.
5. Offering work experience – eg shadowing the CPOs so they can see what is involved in the work.
6. Using skills development as an incentive for young people – eg showing before and after photos of what young people achieved through working on BHCC void properties.
7. Young people can be encouraged to make films about their space and what they want.

## **Involving BME residents**

As previously stated, it is known that BME residents are under-represented in our resident involvement structure and initiatives. The Innovation Group had hoped to involve several BME residents in its work, but this was not possible. Reasons often cited for their limited involvement are similar to those already listed in the 'Barriers to involvement' section. However anecdotal and national reasons of particular relevance worth noting here are:

- Lack of cultural awareness
- Language difficulties (in some cases)
- Lack of knowledge about resident involvement, its purpose, what it offers to residents and what residents can contribute
- Timing of meetings making it difficult to attend.

The Innovation Group has picked up on some good practice examples from other organisations eg friends going along together to focus groups, welcome approaches made to new tenants, and social events or meetings where people bring along a dish to share. However Housing is commissioning a local BME organisation to carry out some detailed work to assist us in the area. Their findings, in the autumn of 2012, will be incorporated into our resident involvement work to counterbalance under-representation of BME groups.

## Menu of involvement options

### Context

Everyone is different – and we know that one size does not fit all, so if we want a range of people involved in order to understand residents in the round, we need a range of ways of involving them.

### Suggestions

- Prepare publicity material for all residents, and information for the website of the many ways residents can get involved - a draft 'Menu of Involvement' can be seen at Appx 4.
- Involve residents more in social, leisure, family friendly or fun activities or consultation events as a platform for coming together and building community cohesion (as sheltered schemes do).
- Set up a young people's forum for younger tenants and children of residents. Alternatively this might be something that some TRAs would like to help establish in their local area so that there is a young persons element of their TRA.
- Consider intergenerational activities eg young people on an estate working to produce a short film with music to capture peoples memories of the estate and how they feel about it, interspersed with younger resident feelings and their aspirations for/thoughts on the future of the area, and other thoughts from much younger people about what they like about where they live. (Adapted from an example from Cannock Chase Council?)
- The menu of involvement document needs to be simple, visual, open, equal, easily accessible, inclusive, participatory, catchy, a mix to suit all residents, engaging, interesting, clear, inviting, welcoming, inspirational, colourful, appealing, and not patronising.

## Communication

Communication sits at the foundation of good resident involvement, especially as most residents prefer to know that they are receiving the information they need that helps them feel in the picture, and then enables them to get more involved if they wish to. Good communication, information exchange, and the appropriate presentation of information runs through every level and aspect of resident involvement.

It also needs to be two-way for both housing and residents to speak and listen, using a variety of communication channels.



### **Key issues**

- Sharing information about the purpose, opportunities and successes in resident involvement.
- TRAs having capacity to feed back easily to residents.
- Needing channels other than meetings for communication.

### **Suggestions for tenant to tenant communication**

1. Continue to support the use of newsletters and encourage more groups to use them.
2. Support, training or shared tips for tenant reps to feed back to their members.
3. Use language, images and interests relevant to particular demographic groups being reached.

Using new media to support improved communications

4. Increase the use of Facebook and Twitter.
5. Provide support to TRAs that might like to set up websites.
6. Non-live abbreviated versions of webcasts and blogs from City Assembly and other meetings made available for people to view later.

### **Suggestions for council to tenant communication and visa versa**

1. Tenant reps should be encouraged to use the established reporting routes to raise issues so that matters that can be dealt with within the system.
2. Officers and residents could work together to produce snippets of information from TRAs, meetings or groups that can be short bite-size chunks placed on the resident involvement pages of the councils website to keep residents informed without them having to read through lengthy minutes of meetings. In addition tweets could be sent to really focus the mind on producing extremely short and easily accessible communications.
3. Videos could be made of engagement activities and put it on the website for a wider audience.
4. Residents who are skilled in developing web pages could offer their services and be involved in that way.
5. Staff and residents could jointly present information on videos - eg to new residents, or 'How to...' videos.
6. Housing might need its own website page for its videos.
7. A web page might be needed where residents can also put videos and other communication.
8. Continue to use Homing in to promote the work of TRAs and active groups.

## Suggestions for Homing In

Homing In could perhaps communicate to reach more people on eg:

1. Upcoming consultations or events
2. Upcoming policy changes
3. Feedback from consultations
4. Current work that working groups are looking at and how residents can feed into this if they want to eg by telephone, email, letter
5. Finding and/or actions from 'Rate Your Estate'
6. Always have a short survey that people can respond to in the paper, refer to website, or text in their vote
7. Diary of events happening in the city, in libraries, by local organisations
8. Information/advice – eg sustainability, water saving advice, healthy living tips/ recipes, fire safety, money related tips
9. Light content eg competitions, youth page, children's page, puzzles, gardening tips.

More aspects of communication are provided in the following section on new media and social media.

## New media and social media

### Context

While recognising that not everyone has access to the internet; increasing numbers of people do, and are also using social media. The councils use of new media is as a complement to traditional forms of communication and it not intended as a replacement. It acknowledges the numerous benefits both for residents and for the council in keeping up with technological developments and modernising our approaches.

### Social Media Presentation – from CPOs, Lee Woolford and Michelle Johnson

- Brighton & Hove and Medway are leading the way
- Facebook and Twitter are a small part of social media
- Housing's Facebook has 91 followers; people need to pass it on
- Demographic profile of users is measurable and much broader
- RIOs can support Associations to develop their own sites
- People need to get something out of it
- The City Assembly Twitter account has 150 followers- the webcast had over 400 hits

- Social media training to be rolled out
- Wordpress.org is easy web tool to use; you just need an email account. It works on all systems. Other ones are google.com / sites or “Moodle”.

### Suggestions

1. Make an Estate Development Budget video and put it on YouTube.
2. Use social media to promote the EDB to young people and increase their involvement- own web page?
3. Have TRAs using more social media first and get them to promote it.
4. An overarching umbrella website for the Brighton & Hove TRAs.
5. Provide other information like the food festival or music gigs to make the site more attractive.
6. TRAs to make it known in their local area and at elections that they are looking for someone to stand for a Social Media post(s) as part of the constitution of associations, and not just an add on.
7. Have social media resident champions.
8. Involve new people with the relevant skills and experience, and ask them to assist TRAs or to help train others.
9. Use existing groups like the Silver Surfer sessions to promote the use of new media.
10. Publicity in Homing In on the innovations that TRAs and the council are developing.
11. An officer or project within housing dedicated to widening the use of the internet and social media.
12. A phone app promoting housing and tenant and leaseholder information that is online.
13. Look at the profiles of people using the housing Facebook and build on it – eg young women are high users so include things of interest targeted at this group.
14. Use social media to promote the scrutiny panel.
15. Involve tenants at schools and colleges, media studies students or local groups eg The Crew Club – or contact local voluntary organisations for advice eg Sussex Community Internet Project.
16. Use community rooms – using broadband access dongles to show local residents what can be done.

### Useful reference

‘Engaging Tenants Through Technology’ – The Housing E Academy

<http://www.housingea.co.uk/files/housing/14.Tenant%20Engagement%20eBook.pdf>

## **Funding resident involvement and EDB**

Total annual cost of resident involvement is approx £46.50 per property, or around £655,000 per year (excluding Estate Development Budget).

The Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group (RMMG) has been looking at potential improvements to the EDB process following a survey on the topic, and will soon be making some recommendations. The Innovation Group has therefore not duplicated this work, but some suggestions emerged during our discussions and are included below.

### **Suggestions**

1. Better use and promotion of funding initiatives that help break down the barriers to involvement eg reimbursing care payments, provision of play or crèche facilities.
2. Reassess grant funding for tenant groups operations, limit to £1,000 for a group.
3. TRAs should be encouraged and supported more to explore and bid for external sources of funding for community projects.
4. Shared taxi journeys wherever possible.
5. TRAs could consider innovative use of the EDB to increase participation.
6. Possibly a 'Dragon's Den' style bidding process for EDB, where people have to pitch to a panel of decision makers made up of a range of residents and officers.
7. Ring fencing some EDB money to go to a public or panel vote in areas where there are no associations.

## **Resident training**

The council is keen to support residents in developing skills and knowledge, and sets aside a sum of money within the resident involvement budget to fund training for tenant representatives, however uptake of training courses has been low over the past two years.

For residents who have not previously been involved in the community participation movement, it can sometimes be daunting to think about what they need to do or know in order to get involved. In some cases a lack of confidence can prevent someone from getting involved in their local TRA. A positive and supportive approach to training and learning can make a big difference to the contribution that residents can then make.

## Suggestions

To demonstrate the council's commitment to resident involvement and the benefits of increasing participation, develop a range of training opportunities and workshops available to all residents. A draft can be seen at Appendix

Include workshops to increase confidence and life skills. This is likely to lead to more people getting to meet other residents and wishing to become involved in their TRA or local community and use their skills.

Use a range of resources to increase the opportunities for residents to increase their skills and knowledge. For example through partnership working with other local organisations; through making better links with internal colleagues around training offered for eg skills development, community development and community engagement; by accessing government funded offers or e-learning opportunities; and through staff and residents potentially run workshops together.

## Measuring the impact of resident involvement

### Context

The Audit Commission says that all housing services need to demonstrate the impact and value for money of resident involvement, and that this should be reviewed annually by staff and residents.

The total annual cost of resident involvement is approx £46.50 per property, or around £655,000 per year (excluding EDB). And, as an example, the City Assembly held in May this year cost almost £3,000 excluding staff time and residents' taxi fares. This cost might be justifiable, but we need to be able to demonstrate value for money, and understand the outcomes or level of impact that our resident involvement framework, resources, activities and processes are achieving.

Even though we have many examples where resident involvement has made a difference, we are behind other organisations in taking a methodical approach to measuring impact. For example, the SOHA Resident Involvement Impact report (from South Oxfordshire Housing Association) demonstrates how the organisation uses a very wide menu of involvement, and measures service improvement and social impact against costs on an annual basis.

## What we might measure

1. The inputs - for example number of tenants and residents associations we have, or the range of ways housing involves residents to help improve services
2. The outputs - the direct impact of the activity itself - eg numbers of people at a meeting
3. The impact or outcome - that is answering the “So what...?” question. For example “So what has changed or happened as a result of an activity?”

It is sometimes hard to measure all the impacts or outcomes of resident involvement as they can sometimes be confused with outputs eg numbers of people attending City Assembly.

Some impact measures will be **hard measures** eg:

- Specific policies that residents have influenced
- changes in how services are provided
- performance levels
- depth of involvement, eg decision making
- People getting into volunteering, education or employment
- Levels to which residents think they can influence services
- Degree of change
- Increase in community safety, reduction in crime
- VFM – not only of the actual exercise but also whether the outcomes result in cost savings elsewhere – eg on ASB, repairs defects, more customer focussed contracts, channel shift savings etc.

And some might be **soft measures** eg:

- increased community spirit
- increased resident confidence
- changes to the feel of an estate
- staff learning about residents, and their needs and aspirations
- what residents have learned about themselves, their community, the work of the council

## Key questions for us

- What is the council aiming for?
- What are TRAs aiming for?
- What objectives are we measuring our impact against?
- Are we about what the baseline is, and how impact will be measured?

- How do we know that we've achieved what we set out to do if we're not clear what we're trying to achieve - eg on a journey, how do we know we've arrived if we don't know where we're going?

### **Suggestions**

1. Set out clearly what the council, TRAs, working groups are trying to achieve.
2. Establish a base line against which to measure progress
3. Carry out annual assessments or evaluation to see if the intended outcomes have been achieved.
4. Consider any unintended outcomes or spin offs - both positive and negative.
5. Publicise the various impact assessment results, and use them to further improve resident involvement.

# Innovation Group

## Terms of reference

### **Purpose of the group**

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Liz Wakefield, wishes to work with a group of tenants who are currently involved in the community participation structure, tenants who are not currently involved, and officers to explore ideas and options for widening resident involvement in all aspects of our work.

### **Group membership**

#### **Residents**

Five tenant representatives nominated from Area Panels for their oversight of resident involvement

Five tenants interested in contributing to this work, who are currently uninvolved, and selected from sections of the community who are under-represented in any formal structures

#### **Councillor**

Councillor Liz Wakefield

#### **Officers**

Ododo Dafé

Rachel Chasseaud

Peter Mustow

Becky Purnell

#### **Others**

Invites to specific guests for particular topics

### **Actions for the group**

To specifically look at:

1. Barriers to greater resident involvement
2. How the barriers can be removed



3. Methods of involvement - meeting the needs and preferences of all demographic groups
4. Use of information technology and new media
5. Ideas for increasing involvement
6. Ideas about working groups
7. 'Code of conduct' or 'Terms of engagement'
8. Resident training opportunities
9. Developing tenant-led scrutiny within Housing
10. Funding resident involvement
11. Evaluating the impact of resident involvement
12. Supporting resident involvement

Scrutiny is about having a group of residents with an enquiring and analytical approach looking at:

- How the housing service performs
- Carrying out research and requesting information
- Forming evidence based judgements
- Making recommendations
- Generally holding the service to account

### **Time commitment**

It is hoped that the group will work together over a 3 month period, meeting every two or three weeks for around two hours. There might be some work that will need to be done in between meetings – eg reading reports or visiting websites of other housing organisations.

### **Meetings**

Meetings will be held approximately every 2 - 3 weeks, at various locations that enable easy access for the majority of the members of the group.

### **Other involvement in the Innovation Group**

The group may also want to involve others who are unable to attend meetings via eg the website, by telephone, or by arranging a one-off focus group.

### **Duration of the group and reporting mechanism**

It is envisaged that the group will complete its work in March, and following consultations, will report back to Housing Management Consultative Committee on completion.

## Draft Code of Conduct

### **What is a code of conduct?**

A code of conduct is a common sense list of guidelines that describes the way residents are expected to conduct themselves generally, but particularly when participating in the resident involvement structure.

### **What do you mean by resident involvement?**

Resident involvement is a mix of the set up, the processes, the people, the activities and the resources that go into hearing from, involving, working with and understanding residents, and enabling them to have more influence over their housing services if they want to.

This code applies to all residents involved in these ways – eg as a tenant and residents association representative, a member of a working group or other group or committee, or as a participant on a training course, workshop or at a meeting.

### **Why have a code of conduct?**

The aim of this overarching code of conduct is to promote positive attitudes and behaviours, and a respectful approach to resident involvement.

NB: Council officers are expected to abide by the terms and conditions of their employment contracts, and deliver services in a respectful and professional way.

A code of conduct will be displayed at meetings. New members to a group will be asked to ensure they are familiar with it and sign a copy or a register to that effect.

### **General behaviour and courtesy**

When taking part in resident involvement activities or groups you are expected to:-

- Not bring resident involvement in Brighton & Hove City Council, their group or tenant and resident association (TRA) into disrepute.
- Comply with your tenancy agreement conditions. The council reserves the right not to work with and involve residents who are in breach of their tenancy agreement.

- Be polite, reasonable and courteous to other residents, council officers, councillors, contractors and other people you come into contact with.
- Not expect to receive preferential treatment from councillors, officers or contractors as a result of being involved.
- Always use the established and publicised procedures to report issues such as repairs, complaints, request for service, etc even if they have been reported before.
- Communicate in a respectful and helpful way, especially when offering constructive criticism or challenge

### **Conduct in meetings and communications**

It is the responsibility of the chair or organiser of the meeting to ensure that the code of conduct is available at the meeting.

You are respectfully expected to:

- Support the meeting process by following the agenda, not talking when someone else is speaking but waiting for the Chairperson's permission to contribute, respecting the position of chair, being courteous, and helping each other to reach effective decisions.
- Make new residents, visitors and observers feel welcome, and give new participants the opportunity to speak and become involved.
- Remember that the purpose of a meeting is to benefit residents generally and not specific individuals so please do not raise personal matters at a meeting.
- Operate within the rules laid down in the code of conduct.
- Give the opportunity to anyone affected by any remarks made, even if it is not about them, to say why they are offended without interruption so that the matter can be looked into or rectified.
- Disclose any **conflict of interest**, whether personal or on behalf of any group you represent, that you consider may affect or influence your approach to the matter under discussion.
- Accept that, although consensus will be sought wherever possible, not everyone will be happy with all decisions all of the time. There will need to be space for differing opinions to be evaluated, and joint approaches should be sought to arrive at win-win solutions. Once an issue has been decided, it should be respected by all present.

### **Discrimination and harassment**

Harassment means improper comment or conduct that a person knows or ought to know would be unwelcome, offensive, embarrassing or hurtful. It is important that people attending meetings, or otherwise being part of resident

involvement activities or initiatives, feel comfortable, safe and free from discrimination or harassment. In order to ensure that this happens, we will challenge, and will support residents who challenge unacceptable or offensive behaviour and language.

You must not verbally, on web postings, or in writing:-

- Use discriminatory language, harass or discriminate against people on the grounds of their age, ability/disability, race/ethnicity, colour, religion or belief, gender, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation or any other matter that might cause offence.
- Behave in an abusive way towards other residents or staff. For example, initiating or spreading hurtful rumours, making a false damaging statement about a person, swearing, or using insulting or threatening behaviour.

Not only is this unacceptable, but it is also illegal, and will not be tolerated.

The recognition policy for tenants' and residents' associations requires each one to have an equal opportunities statement and a means of dealing with residents who do not abide by it.

### **Confidentiality**

Residents must:

- Respect all individual tenants'/residents' confidentiality, whether present or not.
- Refrain from mentioning in public specific individual cases which may cause embarrassment or the identification of an individual.
- Not disclose any information shared with or by the officers that is of a confidential or commercially sensitive nature.

### **Financial responsibility**

Residents who are acting on behalf of other residents (eg as a committee member of a TRA) are in a position of trust. They must, where money is involved:

- Take reasonable care in management and accounting of funds.
- Ensure that accounts are accessible and available for audit.
- Consult with the residents being represented on expenditure.
- Control the use of funds for their proper use.
- Not obtain a personal gain or achieve ulterior objectives.

- Take reasonable care and precautions where property or facilities are made available for use (eg equipment should be stored properly so it is not stolen.)

If an investigation is required, the relevant residents may be required to stand down from their position temporarily while the matter is looked into. Where a committee member or an involved resident has been proven to have deliberately fraudulently obtained funds, benefits, or property, they will be excluded from any further involvement with a recognised resident group. The council may also involve the police and its legal section.

Where mismanagement has resulted from a lack of information or training, the resident(s) will be expected to attend appropriate book keeping training.

### **Political affiliation**

Participating residents may be associated with, or be part of a political party; however they may not represent this party or its views within the role as a tenant representative

### **Specific areas for tenant representatives**

You must:

- Gather views on issues and proposals put forward by housing services that affect all residents in your area and represent the views accurately and fairly to the council or other organisations.
- Remember in meetings and correspondence that you are representing the views of, and are accountable to, your community or residents' association.
- Not speak or write on behalf of a group without its prior agreement. Correspondence, sent on behalf of any group, should be known in advance and available to all members of the group to check before it is sent out in order to give members an opportunity to contribute to it.
- Send apologies if you are unable to attend meetings and consider whether your position should be replaced if attendance is difficult. Non attendance at three meetings without apologies will automatically result in a replacement as the representative on a specific group or committee being sought.

**Behaviour that is unacceptable, offensive or in breach of this code could lead to an individual or association being investigated. In the case of associations it could also lead to it being derecognised.**

Examples of behaviours in breach of this code of conduct include:

- Behaviour that breaches of the council's policy on equal opportunities eg making jokes about people because of their age, race, gender, disability, faith, religion or sexual orientation, or because they are 'different' to you.
- Making assumptions and generalising about people because they belong to a particular group (for example: 'all young people...', 'all Asians...', 'all single parents...', 'all travellers...', 'all white people...').
- Describing people in a way that may be seen as an insult or a threat.
- Behaving in an aggressive manner towards other people or in such a way that they feel threatened or intimidated – including threatening to get someone sacked, shouting and using offensive language.
- Verbal or physical assault upon any person or persons.
- Criminal behaviour, including fraud.
- Financial mismanagement.
- Being involved in resident involvement activities while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Conflict between committee members that means the group ceases to operate effectively and is no longer representative.
- Abuse of power - threatening to have an officer sacked or another tenant evicted instead of using appropriate channels to make a complaint.
- Abuse of power – public accusations about an individual in a meeting or by petition or by email and copying in senior managers, councillors and MPs instead of using the appropriate channels to make a complaint.

Please note that 'people' referred to above includes residents, officers, councillors, contractors and other people you come into contact with.

### **Challenging unacceptable behaviour**

Any participant can challenge unacceptable or offensive behaviour through the chair or agreed lead person at a meeting.

Outside of meetings any participant can challenge through a tenant representative or a council officer, or by completing the '**Unacceptable conduct complaints form**'.

(This can be obtained through resident representatives, Community Participation Officers, or by telephoning the Housing Customer Service Hub, or found on the council housing pages of the council's website).

## **Breach of code of conduct**

If a complaint is about the service, an individual member of staff or a team, it should be made to the line manager or made using the Council's formal complaints procedure.

It is difficult to be precise about how all breaches of the code of conduct will be dealt with. It can depend on the nature of the breach and the context within which the breach occurred. However, the following should act as a guide.

### **Breach at a meeting**

Wherever possible, complaints or allegations of a breach of the code should be dealt with amicably and resolved at the point that they occur.

The person making the remark or behaving unacceptably will be expected to apologise immediately and not to repeat it.

- a. If the person refuses to apologise and/or continues to behave unacceptably or uses offensive language, the chair, lead person or lead officer will ask the person to leave.
- b. The person behaving unacceptably or using offensive language will be written to within one week of the incident and given an opportunity to apologise in writing to the person or group concerned within two weeks.
- c. The person behaving unacceptably will be offered the opportunity to attend relevant training, where appropriate.
- d. If the person behaving unacceptably does not take up any of these opportunities the person(s) responsible for the meeting or involvement activity will be notified. It might be that the matter is referred to the tenancy team if there is a potential breach of the tenancy agreement, or to the independent Joint Adjudication Panel where appropriate for assistance in reaching a satisfactory resolution to the matter.

### **Breach outside of meetings**

Wherever possible, complaints should be dealt with amicably and resolved at the point that they occur.

- a. All complaints about the conduct of a participant should, in the first instance, be referred to the service manager or the Resident Involvement Manager.

This should ideally be done at the time of the breach. However, if the complainant is not confident about doing this, a complaint can be made later verbally in person, by phone, or in writing. This should happen as soon as possible after the breach.

- b. The Resident Involvement Manager (or most appropriate officer) will investigate the matter and hold an informal meeting with the person breaching the code of conduct. The person concerned might not realise their behaviour is a problem and might easily modify this once they have been told about it. They will be given the opportunity to apologise to the complainant or the meeting if this is appropriate. In most cases it will be sufficient to obtain an undertaking that the breach will not happen again.
- c. In the event of a repetition of the breach, the person concerned will be required to withdraw from the involvement initiative, and they or any aggrieved person can ask to make representations or submit an appeal to the Joint Adjudication Panel which is trained to help resolve matters in a fair and just manner.

Complaints about residents' behaviour might be dealt with by the Resident Involvement Team, or by the independent Joint Adjudication Panel. If the complaint is of a serious nature, it may be referred to the Tenancy Team for investigation under the Tenancy Agreement.

Please note that serious breaches of the Code of Conduct, allegations of financial mismanagement or of criminal behaviour may result in a TRA being derecognised by the council until the matter is resolved. In practice, this means that the council will cease to fund the association, and involve it in involvement and training initiatives. All contact during the derecognised period will be confined to the issue under investigation, and a meeting will be arranged with council staff and the association's committee to discuss the process being followed; advise of expected future conduct, of any actions required by the association (eg training), and of potential consequences of further breaches. In extreme circumstances a report might also be made to the police.

Complainants will be told promptly how their complaint is being dealt with and the reasons for this.

## Outcomes

Depending on the circumstances, potential outcomes could be:

1. An apology is accepted
2. An undertaking is agreed - eg to complete specific training or to stop a particular action
3. The person might be removed from the TRA or working group

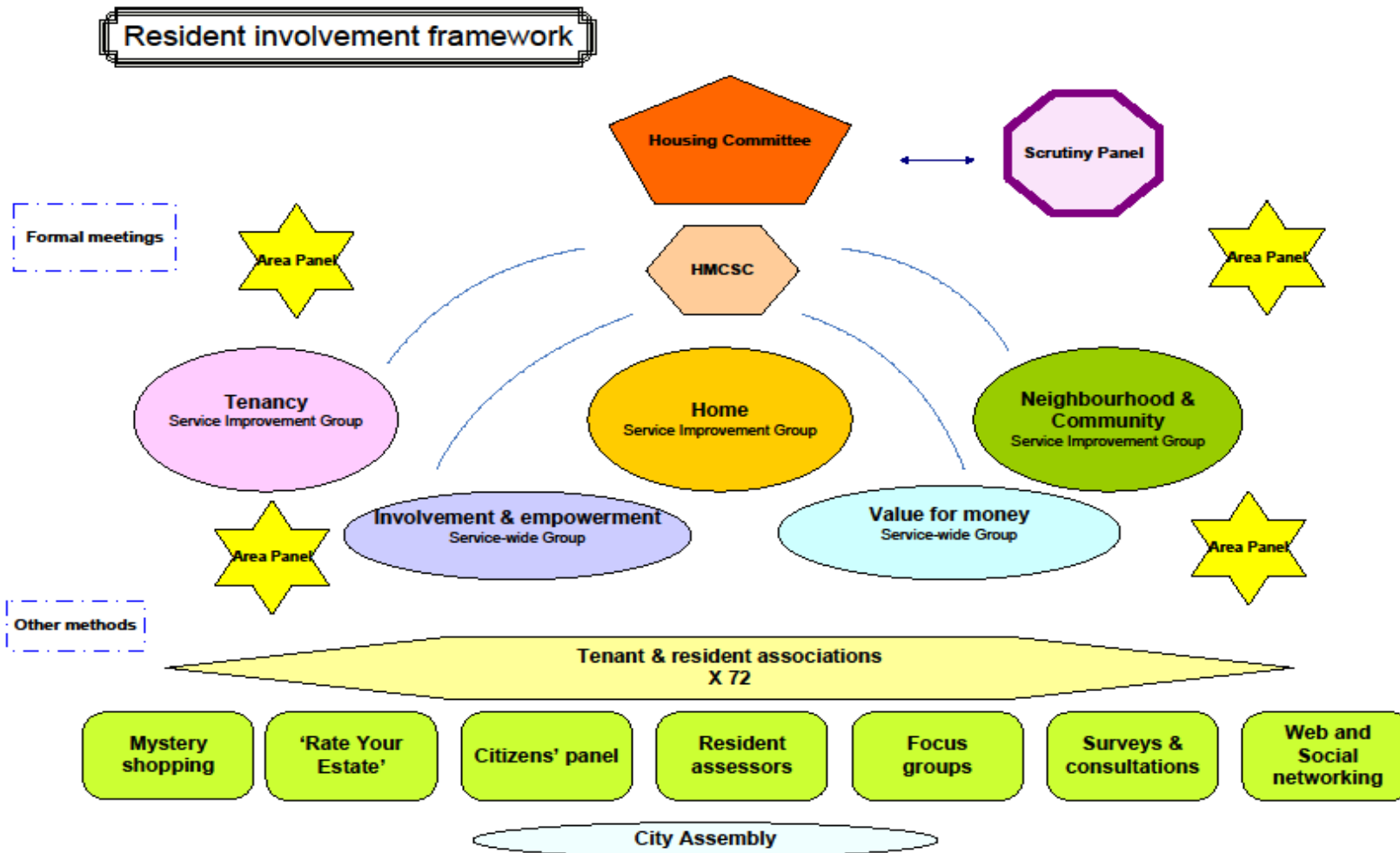


4. Tenancy action
5. Temporary derecognition of a TRA
6. Permanent derecognition of a TRA
7. Referral for mediation
8. Referral to the Joint Adjudication Panel

## Right to appeal

In cases where an officer decision has been made that is not agreed with, the person or TRA can make an appeal to the Joint Adjudication Panel, being clear on the aspects they are in dispute over and suggesting an alternative course of action.





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## Tenant Scrutiny Panel

### What is Tenant Scrutiny?

Tenant scrutiny aims to place tenants at the heart of assessing how well their social landlord is delivering its services. This is known as co-regulation. Tenant scrutiny therefore has been established to enable tenants to hold their landlords to account, using methods such as:

- Tenant led inspectors
- Tenant set/monitored performance indicators
- Tenant set service standards and local offers

The kinds of regulation that tenant scrutiny will deliver, involve:

- Consumer regulation e.g. meeting service standards, dealing with complaints
- Economic regulation e.g. ensuring value for money and financial viability
- Ensuring national standards and locally set standards are met.

The key features of tenant scrutiny are:

- Independence – separate from those making decisions about the Housing Service, so can challenge those decisions
- Formality - to give power and accountability to tenant scrutiny
- Resident power – to ensure that tenants have access to the information they need and can hold the service to account

Tenant scrutiny would represent a step change in current relationship with residents which goes beyond consultation and engagement, and helps further develop the relationships already created with residents as equal stakeholders. It would look to deliver:

- Greater accountability
- Improved tenant and resident satisfaction with the service
- Demonstrable tenant involvement in self-regulation
- A way of challenging issues at a high level
- A means of improving services and securing efficiencies
- Real power to drill down into issues and make evidence based recommendations to the council

### How will tenant scrutiny be delivered in Brighton & Hove City Council?

Tenant scrutiny in BHCC will build on an already well developed menu of involvement for tenants. Tenant scrutiny will form an important part of the menu by placing more power into the hands of tenants to review the issues they consider to be important.

## **What is the role of this panel?**

- To hold the landlord (BHCC) to account
- Scrutinise service delivery and make recommendations for improvement, aiming to complete around three in-depth reviews of priority issues per year
- Have access to timely and useful performance information
- Will link to other forms of resident involvement e.g. mystery shopping, to capture evidence and hear the views of residents

## **Membership of the panel**

The Innovation Group looked at the membership of the panel and has recommended that it:

- Has 12 members who are BHCC tenants and leaseholders
- Is made up of a mixture of one third existing tenant representatives and two thirds residents who are not currently involved
- Has a representative mix of residents e.g. age, ethnicity, etc
- Ensures a good mix of skills and experience

Members of the TSP will not be able to sit on other existing tenant bodies such as HMCC to ensure that the TSP maintains independence.

Members of the Innovation Group have recommended the following process to recruit TSP members:

1. Produce a tenant information pack that contains general information about the panel, the type of work involved, how it fits in with existing structures, skills needed, method of selection etc.
2. Prepare a presentation on scrutiny for existing meetings – e.g. Area Panel, City Assembly where ‘Expression of Interest’ forms could be given as part of the presentation notes.
3. Place a big explanatory article and recruitment advert in Homing In.
4. Prepare application pack to include application form, the draft Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct, an Equal Opportunities Form, the description of the role, and statement regarding non-disclosure of information.
5. Interview panel to consist of an officer and resident mix

It is also suggested that an open day is held to allow any interested tenants or leaseholders to hear a presentation about the TSP and talk to officers and other residents. Recruitment and selection must be non-intimidating and supportive. The aim is to secure a range of skills and experiences on the TSP, and to also involve residents who have, as of yet, not been hugely involved in tenant participation. For all TSP members, a dedicated training

and support programme will be necessary, and residents who do not currently have all the necessary skills but wish to develop them will be actively encouraged to express their interest.

The panel will be supported by officers from the council's scrutiny team working closely with housing staff. This will ensure independence, but also that knowledge on housing matters is utilised.

### **Future process**

Further work will need to be undertaken to:

- Develop a communication strategy
- Arrange an open day for interested residents
- Hold a selection day for residents who express an interest
- Develop an induction and training plan

## **Appendix 4b**

### **Brighton & Hove Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) Draft Terms of Reference**

#### **Aims and Objectives**

- To operate on behalf of tenants and leaseholders, to ensure that the council provides housing services that meet residents' needs and are of the highest standard.
- To continually review and improve housing services.
- To provide an opportunity for tenants to examine housing service performance and procedures and challenge and question staff who manage & deliver the service.
- Make recommendations to senior managers and councillors on how housing services can be improved.

#### **The Role of the TSP**

- Prioritise and oversee tenant led scrutiny activities
- Collect evidence to enable housing services to be scrutinised
- Examine the evidence, make recommendations for service improvements
- Report recommendations to senior management or councillors
- Monitor and review agreed action plans
- Tell other tenants what the panel is doing and encourage them to get involved

#### **Membership**

- 12 places will be available for membership
- All Brighton & Hove Housing tenants and leaseholders will be eligible to apply
- Members will serve a terms of two years after which they can stand again but they will be considered alongside other applicants
- Successful applicants will be selected from those considered to best meet the role profile following discussions with the selection panel.
- The membership of the TSP will aim to broadly reflect the characteristics of the tenant population
- Members must sign and abide by the Code of Conduct and Breach of Code of Conduct procedures which undertake to deal firmly and promptly with any cases of discrimination or harassment

### **Frequency of Meetings**

The Panel will normally have a minimum of 6 meetings per year. The Panel may establish Task and Finish Groups to lead on specific activities. Task and Finish Groups must report to the Scrutiny Panel at an agreed frequency.

In the event of a panel member failing to attend 3 consecutive TSP meetings without good reason, they will be deemed to have resigned, unless otherwise agreed by the panel. Their place will be filled via the recruitment process.

### **Election of Chair**

The TSP will election a chair and vice-chair on an annual basis by a straight majority vote.

### **Quorum**

A quorum will be 50% of members i.e. if membership is 12, a quorum will be 6. Inquorate meetings should be noted and decisions ratified at the next quorate meeting.

### **Officer Support**

The Scrutiny Panel will be supported by BHCC's scrutiny team to take minutes, advise tenant representatives, coordinate meetings and support the drafting of reports and recommendations to the council.

### **Area of Business**

The remit of the Scrutiny Panel will be to consider all areas of housing service performance. It will be able to request any relevant information, or attendance by council officers, needed to undertake its duties.

### **Programme of Work**

The Scrutiny Panel will develop an initial programme of scrutiny work and review this each subsequent year. The priority areas for review will be decided using feedback from all available information, including:

- Performance reports
- Reports from area panel, mystery shoppers, City Assembly, etc
- Tenant/Resident Associations
- Tenant surveys, complaints and benchmarking

### **Accountability to Tenants**

Tenants will be able to raise an issue directly with the TSP. TSP meetings will have time set aside to consider requests for scrutiny, letters and questions.

The minutes and all reports of the TSP will be made available on the council's website and to any tenant on request.



### **Recommendations from the scrutiny panel**

All recommendations of the TSP will be presented to the council's Housing Committee within two months of being agreed. The Housing Committee will agree a response to the report/recommendations of the TSP. A summary of the report, recommendations and any agreed actions will be reported back to the TSP and published on the council's website.

### **Training**

All new members will undertake an induction programme and training and capacity building requirements will be assessed. A training programme will be developed, delivered and regularly reviewed.

### **Evaluation of TSP Activities**

The work of the TSP will be subject to an annual impact assessment and its findings will be reported.

## **Appendix 4c**

### **Draft TSP Member Role Description**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the role of a Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) member is to work as a member of a team to:

- Operate on behalf of BHCC tenants and residents, ensuring that they receive services of the highest standard
- Take an independent view of BHCC housing performance
- Establish priorities for reviewing housing performance
- Oversee scrutiny activities
- Collect evidence to enable services to be scrutinised
- Assess performance against agreed standards
- Produce evidence based recommendations
- Hold councillors and officers to account for performance.

#### **Training and Support**

All members will undertake an Induction programme and further training needs will be assessed. Appropriate training and support will be provided.

#### **Key Activities**

Key activities of TSP members are to:

- Attend meetings, training and planning sessions
- Read documents in preparation for meetings
- Review performance information
- Prioritise service areas for review
- Compare performance to other comparable organisations
- Question officers and/or other relevant people (eg contractors) on areas of interest
- Participate in in-depth reviews of areas of concern
- Where standards fall below expected levels, consider how improvements might be made
- Work co-operatively with other TSP members, BHCC staff and tenants and residents
- Assist in the preparation of reports
- Produce recommendations for Housing Committee.

## **Responsibilities**

- To familiarise yourself with BHCC policies and procedures including the Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct, Confidentiality, Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Data Protection
- To carry out the role of TSP member in accordance with the policies and procedures
- To observe confidentiality where necessary
- To remain impartial and objective at all times
- Not to raise any personal issues or concerns via the TSP
- To act professionally and carry out your responsibilities with integrity and high standards of behaviour at all times
- To act and behave in a manner that ensures the safety of yourself and others
- To treat everyone with respect and ensure that you are responsive to the needs of all people in the community.

**Appendix 4d**  
**Draft Tenant Scrutiny Panel Application Form**

Name	
Address	
Tel	
Email	

Please tick the box below to say which knowledge and experience you could bring to the Scrutiny Panel. We don't expect you to be an expert in everything

Your knowledge and experiences	Yes	No	Not sure or Some knowledge / experience
Are you a Brighton & Hove City Council tenant or leaseholder living in a BHCC property			
Motivated to improve services			
I can commit the time needed to make the scrutiny panel a success (at least xx hours per month)			
I am willing to participate in the training sessions			
Want to make a difference			
I have worked on a committee			
I have worked as a volunteer			
I have worked in the community			

**Details of employment and voluntary work**

Please give details of your current and past employment. Please give details of any other public or voluntary work you do including any other board or committee membership.

**Please explain why you want to join the scrutiny panel and why you would be a good scrutiniser.**

**Any other skills and experience you would like to tell us about, including any qualifications or training**

## Equalities Monitoring

- Age
- Health needs
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Religious/faith groups
- Sexual orientation

For help completing the form or for further information please contact xxxxxx

## Draft

# Menu of Resident Involvement

This is a very rough and basic draft of information that would be publicised and also made available on the council's website.

(NB: The **clock** and **heart** symbols have been removed for now because of the computer space they take up in a Word document)

**This menu lists the opportunities for you to get involved in shaping your housing service or to participate in your local community.**

### Key to symbols

**C** = The more clocks you see by each activity, the more time it will take.

**H** = The more hearts you see by each activity the greater influence your involvement will have in making a positive difference.

### Tenants and Resident Associations

**C C C**

**H H H** These associations are the mainstay of local resident involvement. Their meetings enable groups of residents to discuss local issues.

Speak to your Neighbourhood Officer or the Housing Customer Service Hub to see if a group exists in your area, or to the Resident Involvement Team to get support and advice on how to set one up.

### Estate walkabouts

**C C**

**H H H** Your opportunity to join your Neighbourhood Officer to inspect your estate, report any repairs, and to check the quality of the maintenance.

## **Rate Your Estate**

**C C**

**H H H** Train to use photo cards to assess the quality of the estates using a red, amber green traffic light system.

## **Resident assessor**

**C C**

**H H H** Train to assess specific areas of our service to make sure that standards meet residents' expectations.

## **Mystery shopping**

**C C**

**H H H** Your opportunity to test and report back on the services we provide by visits to our offices or from the comfort of your own home by email, phone or letter. Full training and support is offered.

## **Focus groups**

**C**

**H H H** A group of around 10 people who come together for one time to focus on discussing a single topic. Share ideas, give feedback, express your views. We want to make sure that we get ideas about how to improve our services from all groups of people. This opportunity would take 3 hours of your time.

## **Communications Champs / Readers Panel / "Tell it right"**

**C C**

**H** Join staff at editorial meetings to ensure that our newsletter "Homing In" is resident focused by making suggestions and contributing articles. Tenant proof our publications like the "Annual Report" to make sure they are clear and likely to interest all groups of residents.

## **Training courses**

**C C**

**H** We arrange through local organisations or provide training opportunities for all residents throughout the year on different subjects like organising a community event, taking minutes, or saving money.

Have a look at our training programme on the website, or contact the Housing Customer Service Hub to see what's on offer.



## Fun days

C C

H Work with our Resident Involvement Team and your neighbours to organise a fun event for everyone in your area, this could be coming together to share food, a Jubilee street party, or ideas that you suggest – feel free to use your imagination.

## Joint Adjudication Panel

C C

H H Interested in helping to resolve differences, and looking into possible breaches of our Code of Conduct? This small group of officers and residents will be trained to help come to fair resolutions when conflict occurs.

**City Assembly** we might need to think of a much more engaging and less formal name for this

C

H Come along to our twice yearly conference for residents and catch up with the latest developments, meet other residents and senior managers and join in the debate.

## Surveys and questionnaires - join the 5-minute Club

C

H H H Completing a survey is a quick way for residents to communicate satisfaction with our services, help us measure our performance or feed in ideas and suggestions. We get feedback that can help us improve. Surveys can take only a few minutes - by post, telephone, email or text messaging!

## E-bate

C

H Have your say without leaving your home by joining e-bate our online consultation group. All sorts of housing and community related topics are up for discussion.



**Facebook**

C

H Join our Facebook group to keep up to date with what's going on. The Resident Involvement Team can help your group set up its own social networking site or web based forum.

## **Service Improvement Groups**

**C C C C C**

**H H H H H** There are five Service Improvement Groups open to all residents with half the members being elected tenant representatives, and half from residents who have expressed an interest in being involved in these areas.

The groups will work on a number of areas that come under their remit, and might co-opt new members for 'task and finish' or short life sub groups to look at specific new topics.

The five main groups are:

- Tenancy
- Home
- Neighbourhood and community
- Involvement and empowerment
- Value for money and business improvement

Each group will have sub groups within them that will enable people to be involved in specific areas of interest to them for fixed periods of time. Contact your Resident Involvement Officer or the Housing Customer Service Hub to find out more.

## **Housing Management Sub Committee**

**C C**

**H H H** Elected residents attend this committee where councillors make decisions about council housing, and contribute to the debate and have an indicative vote on recommendations.

## **Residents Scrutiny Panel**

**C C C C C**

**H H H H H** The Residents Scrutiny Panel independently scrutinise Brighton & Hove City Council's housing performance and make recommendations for improvements, ensuring that that residents' views and priorities are at the heart of everything we do.

All residents can apply dependent on the vacancies available. The aim is to complete around four scrutiny reviews a year, and meeting frequency and times, and other aspects of work are agreed by members.

## **Other options for getting involved**

- Comment, complements and complaints
- Social media
- On line forums
- Local street or block groups
- Drop-ins
- Community clean-up days
- Activities in residents' rooms – eg board game championships, workshops, homework club etc

Is there something you'd be keen to get involved in that's not listed here?

Can you and your friends and neighbours organise local activities eg 'tea and teach' sessions to learn card games, dancing, knitting, netball, football etc? If so, your local tenant and resident association would love to hear from you so please let us know.

## Draft

### Residents training programme 2012 - 2013

(This is a very rough and basic draft of information that would be publicised and also made available on the council's website.)

The council, the Resource Centre and local organisations provide a wide range of training courses to help you improve your skills and increase knowledge. The aim is to help residents learn new skills and gain the confidence to use these skills to make a positive difference in your community, personal life or workplace.

The following internal courses are now available:

1. Mystery shopping
2. Estate Inspections and Rate Your Estate
3. Improving housing services (includes scrutiny and monitoring)
4. Tackling neighbour disputes
5. Finding your way around the council
6. Managing your finances
7. Home energy efficiency
8. Filling in housing benefit forms
9. Recycling (visit)
10. E-learning
11. How to run your own training session
12. Social media skills (includes setting up a website and using Facebook)

Training that is recommended as essential for TRA committees are:

1. Running an efficient tenants and residents group (includes committee skills and effective minute taking)
2. Communication skills (includes marketing and the media, successful newsletters and communication skills)
3. Organising successful events (includes risk assessments)
4. Taking care of the money (includes book keeping and fundraising)
5. How to write a questionnaire

6. Confidence and public speaking
7. Recognising differences in people

We can also help with external courses:

1. Trafford Hall tenants training residential courses (organised by the Government)
2. Tenant Scrutiny
3. Community engagement
4. Risk assessments
5. Fire safety
6. Food hygiene
7. Child protection
8. Basic first aid
9. Healthy eating on a budget
10. Introduction to the construction industry
11. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
12. Adult Literacy and Numeracy
13. Introduction to computers

## **E – Learning**

Brighton & Hove City Council has joined forces with the Housing e-Academy to provide you with the opportunity to improve your skills and knowledge. You can attend a session in the training programme for E-Learning to help you feel comfortable completing the below modules in your own time at home.

The courses are:

### **1. Around the Home**

Basic Home Maintenance

Saving Energy to Reduce Bills

Pest Awareness

Feeding a Family on a Budget

What is Telehealth?

## **2. Social Issues**

Hate Crime

Anti-social behaviour

Issues Surrounding Drug

Issues Surrounding Alcohol

Preparing for Interviews

## **3. Using the Internet**

Starting out on the Internet

Internet Safety

Power of the Internet

Getting Started with Social Media.

## **4. Community**

Gypsy and Traveller Culture

Respect

Building a Community

Cultural Awareness.

<http://www.housingea.co.uk/files/housing/Access%20Tenant%20Plus.pdf>

**If you are interested in any of the courses in our training offer please complete the application from below.**

You can also do this by completing the form on the Resident Involvement pages of the council's website.

If you would like to suggest a workshop that is not listed here please let us know.

Also, if you are interested in running a workshop for residents (perhaps with officers) please do get in touch with the Resident Involvement Team.

# Application for training

Name: .....

Address:.....

.....

.....

Contact tel. no.....Email:.....

Which time would you prefer:    Morning      Afternoon      Evening

Courses will be run when there are 8-12 people interested in attending.

Courses will be run in community venues where possible. Travel costs and refreshments will be provided (with lunch provided if the course is all day). Places will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis.

I am interested in attending the following training sessions:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Please return the completed form to: The Resident Involvement Team  
The Housing Centre, Unit 1, Fairway Trading Estate, Eastergate Road  
Brighton, BN2 4QL or email [housingtraining@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:housingtraining@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

## Sources of information

Some of the documents looked at, organisations contacted, or organisations whose reports or websites were looked at during the work of the Innovation Group are listed below.

“Improving Services through Resident Involvement” Audit Commission 2004

Report of Resident Involvement Survey, BHCC 2010

Report of resident satisfaction survey (STAR survey), BHCC 2012

“Engaging Tenants Through Technology” – The Housing E Academy

<http://www.housingea.co.uk/files/housing/14.Tenant%20Engagement%20eBook.pdf>

Birmingham City Council

Bristol

CV CHA

Helena Homes

The Hyde Group

Mercian

Norwich City Council

Peterborough

Portsmouth City Council

Salford ALMO

Salix Homes

Sheffield Council

SOHA - South Oxfordshire Housing Association

Stoneham

Winchester City Council

Worthing Homes



### Evaluation of how the Innovation Group has worked

#### Positive aspects

1. Fantastic gelling of the group, with everyone feeling connected and able to make valid contributions in a 'safe space'.
2. Hard work! - mostly weekly meetings
3. Supportive group - all contributions listened to and carefully considered
4. At the end of each meeting, getting papers for the topic of discussion for the following meeting
5. Relaxed, informal approach to the meetings - a breath of fresh air from some of the overly formal meetings that seem to be our mainstay
6. Learning from other organisations
7. Ability to consider any suggestions

#### Learning

1. Massive under-estimation of the time commitment needed by all group members to study papers and prepare for meetings
2. Huge under-estimation of the time needed to complete the work (hence weekly meetings to fit it into an already extended timescale)
3. How to harness and include views from a range of council officers
4. How to harness and include views from a range of ward councillors
5. The level of hostility to this work was hard for all members of the group, and presented learning opportunities around information dissemination, and communicating more widely about the work of the group. It also further crystallised the need for modernisation and improvement of our resident involvement framework.

