



Resident Engagement Strategy 2015-2017

This strategy enables interested or active Medway Council tenants and leaseholders (residents) the opportunity to recognise our commitment to supporting new methods for wider involvement, in order to influence change that leads to service improvement.

Aim

Our aim is to enable residents to improve services, deliver accountability and improve residents' quality of life.

This aim is aligned with the council's two core values of:

- Putting customers at the centre of everything we do
- Giving value for money.

Introduction

Resident engagement is the name we give to all the activities we undertake that help us to know what our residents need and want, and that enable residents to influence, challenge and scrutinise the services they receive.

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) originally defined resident involvement (or tenant participation) as '*a two way process involving both residents and their landlords in the sharing of ideas, enabling residents to influence decisions regarding the management of their homes.*' This concept has grown and developed.

Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 places a duty on a landlord to consult tenants on any changes in housing management

From April 2012 the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) took over the regulation of all social landlords in England from the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). A revised regulatory framework also came into effect at the

same time. The tenant involvement and empowerment standard has been revised to place greater emphasis on providers developing mechanisms to involve tenants in the scrutiny of their performance. It now includes a requirement that:

- Tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlords about how performance might be improved.

And a series of expectations that:

- Providers produce timely and relevant performance information to support effective tenant scrutiny
- Providers support the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups and respond in a constructive and timely manner to them.
- Offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing related policies, and the delivery of housing resident services
- Consulting with tenants and acting reasonably in providing them with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery
- Providing tenants with a range of opportunities to scrutinise performance against all standards and in the development of the Annual Report
- Providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more actively involved.

The standard also includes a new requirement to provide opportunities for tenants to be involved in the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks and for them to share in the savings made as a result such as the government's 'tenant cashback' scheme.

The regulatory framework for the provision of social housing in England requires all providers to consult with tenants on local priorities in a number of areas and, where appropriate, develop a 'local offer'.

Local Offers are based around the Homes and Community Agencies standards of:

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment; covering customer service, choice and complaints, involvement and empowerment and understanding and responding to diverse needs of tenants
- Homes; covering the quality of our homes and repairs and maintenance
- Neighbourhood and Community; covering neighbourhood management, local area co-operation and anti-social behaviour

The Localism Act contains a requirement for a 'democratic filter' to be developed to resolve more complaints at a local level. This will involve giving power to tenant's panels, Councillors or MPs to resolve complaints before they are referred to the Ombudsman.

Context

Here are some recent examples of resident engagement activities at the council:

- √ In 2012 residents undertook a review of our void properties and delivered a report on their findings
- √ In 2013 residents took part in an independent ASB review to help improve this part of the service
- √ In 2014 residents engaged with the tender process for the repairs and maintenance contract setting out priorities of residents and taking part in the interview process of contractors prior to the award of the contract
- √ In 2014 residents engaged with an independent consultant and took part in a workshop on how we should improve the resident engagement service

Despite our recent achievements we accept there are some areas where we need to improve with reference to providing value for money when considering both our costs and outcomes when benchmarking the Resident Engagement Service against similar sized organisations.

Following consultation with our residents, these indicators have formed the basis of our objectives for the Resident Engagement Service.

Objectives

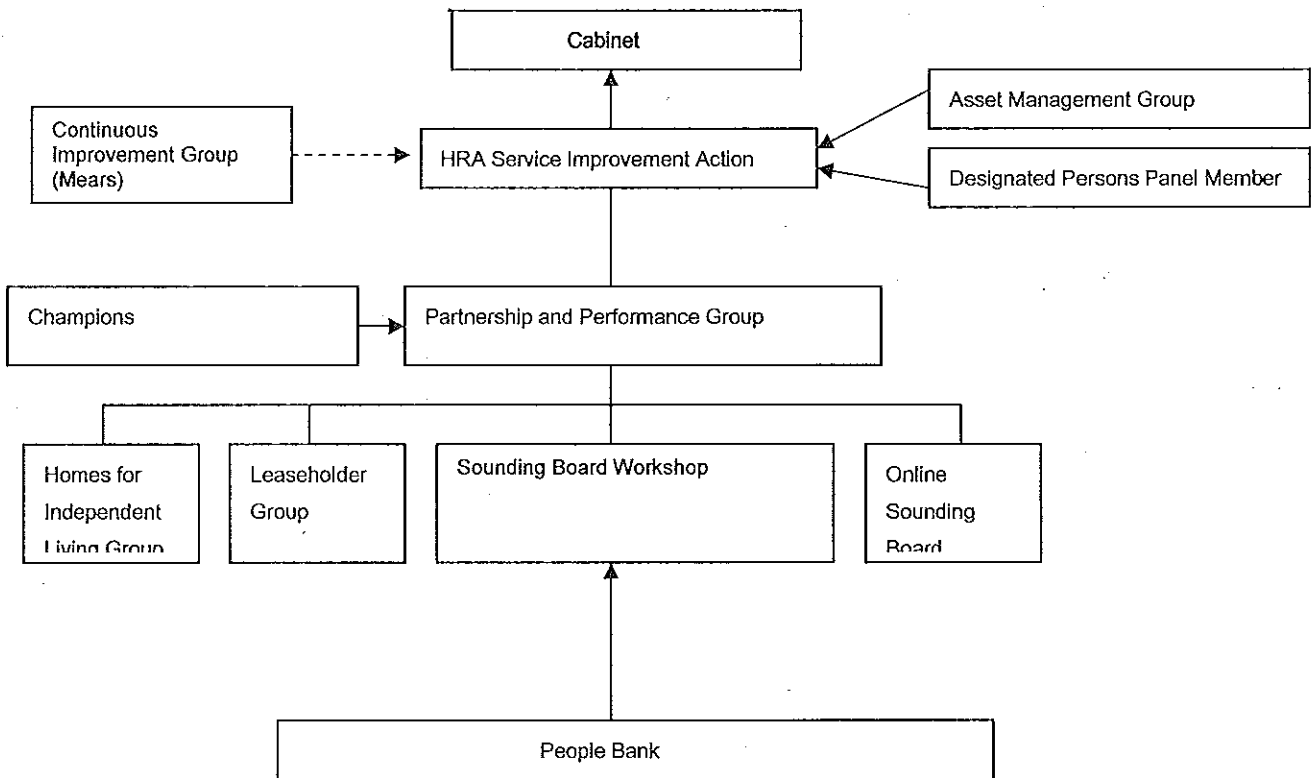
- Introduce **new methods** of involvement so that we can engage with a wider representation of our customers profile towards proportional representation
- Focus all activities on **service improvement** and monitor outcomes
- Set up and support a new Resident **Scrutiny Panel**

Structure

The structure of our resident engagement service will be used as the vehicle to achieve our objectives.

The Resident Engagement Service will include the role of volunteers tasked to support broader objectives across the council and housing service including

areas where we need to improve including improvement our estates, responding to anti-social behaviour, supporting households in fuel poverty and getting-online.



A brief description of the roles is detailed below. All roles are voluntary however we will reimburse travel costs and provide relevant training where required to support residents in their roles.

Partnership and Performance Group

Monitor our performance and carry out service reviews and present their recommendations to senior officers and review feedback from residents at workshops and online consultation.

Sounding Board Workshop/Online

The 'sounding board' will be used as a method to consult residents. There will be two formats to the 'customer sounding board', represented both online in addition to a forum. It is anticipated that the online group will enable younger residents to engage, in support of our Young Persons Engagement Strategy.

Estate Champion

This role will involve visiting estates and inspecting their standard in accordance to our Estate Standard, monitor the performance of our grounds maintenance contract and quality of estate services, undertake estate inspection alongside housing officers and make recommendations for environmental improvements.

Digital Support

This role will involve visiting residents in their homes or hosting training sessions to support persons access the internet and using computers.

Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Support

Support residents that feel vulnerable in the community as a result of being a victim of ASB.

Energy Efficiency Champion

Visit households to give advice on how residents can save money on their energy bills.

Residents can also become involved by:

- Setting up a Resident Association
- Return surveys including our bi-annual STAR survey
- Take part in our bi-annual Tenant Conference
- Attend our Estate Inspections

We will also support Mears' Continuous Improvement Group with their role to monitor and challenge our repairs service. This Group has been selected. If you want to be kept in touch about this Group please contact Mears Community Manager.

If you would like to be involved please contact our Community Development Officer tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk

