

Cabinet – 6 February 2024

ADDENDUM – Item 8(a) Resident Involvement Strategy

Following Cabinet Housing Panel on 31 January 2024, a number of amendments were suggested to the draft Resident Involvement Strategy. The updated Resident Involvement Strategy is attached showing the track changes of the suggested amendments.

The amendments are summarised below:

- An annual review of the strategy (rather than every 3 years)
- To emphasise how the Resident's Panel assists with delivering the objectives of the Resident Involvement Strategy
- In the resident's priorities section of the strategy – to also reflect the feedback from residents in the report that the Residents Panel undertook on the management of communal areas at council housing estates
- Some amends to make the wording clearer
- Inserting the weblink to the Housing Allocations Policy
- Emphasising the importance of two way communication; information provided from the Council as well as feedback from residents

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WHBC Council Housing Resident Involvement Strategy 2024-2027

Introduction

This draft strategy sets out how Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) will engage with its tenants and leaseholders to ~~seek~~find out, listen to and act on their views in the development, delivery and evaluation of our housing services.

'Homes to be proud' of is one of the five priorities in WHBC's Community Plan for 2024-27: "Putting Communities at our Heart."

We recognise this can be better achieved by working ~~in collaboration with~~together with our tenants and leaseholders as they are well placed to tell us what works well in our housing services and what could work better.

There is currently a core group of dedicated tenants and leaseholders that form the Residents Panel and act as a 'critical friend' to the council. They help us to achieve the objectives in this strategy by looking at performance data, strategies and policies, as well as collecting feedback from residents about our housing services. The Panel use this information to raise matters with us and make recommendations around service improvements.

We are committed to providing a wider variety of ~~involvement opportunities~~ways to be involved, ensuring all tenants and leaseholders who want to ~~participate~~take part can do so at a commitment level they feel comfortable with.

The overall aim of the strategy is to ~~widen~~increase involvement, using what tenants and leaseholders tell us, as well as their local knowledge, to shape and improve our housing services and so increase confidence and satisfaction around our performance.

For the purposes of this strategy, the term residents refers to all those living in council-owned properties or accessing the council's housing service. This includes tenants, leaseholders, all family members of tenants living in the property and those in temporary accommodation.

(Quote from Executive Member for Housing, Cllr Lynn Chesterman OBE: - "At Welwyn Hatfield, we are committed to putting our residents at the heart of what we do. This Resident Involvement Strategy seeks to encourage a culture throughout our housing service that shows we listen to tenants and leaseholders, learn from their experiences and act upon their feedback. I hope after reading our strategy, you will be inspired to get involved in some way.")

Our Vision –

- Work together with our residents to continue to develop a high-quality housing service that is responsive to their changing needs and aspirations, tackles the stigma of social housing and creates a sense of community where people feel safe and live in a pleasant environment.

- Ensure our residents are given the opportunity to engage with us and have their voices heard and considered in a meaningful way.
- Build trust by ~~sharing information, encouraging scrutiny,~~ listening to tenants, learning from their experiences, ~~and~~ acknowledging their participation, [sharing information, and encouraging examination of our services.](#)
- Work in partnership with other services in the borough to ~~maximise-increase~~ the impact of our resident involvement and, ~~importantly~~ deliver value for money.
- Meet statutory obligations (including the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/36/contents/enacted) and regulatory standards (Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing)

Resident Priorities

We conducted a tenant and leaseholder survey in 2023 and received 924 responses.

Through this survey, we were able to identify common themes around tenants' and leaseholders' experience of and satisfaction with our housing services.

Repairs, ~~estate~~ management [of our housing estates](#) and customer service were identified ~~by respondents~~ as areas that could be improved.

~~Respondents also wanted b~~Better communication around repairs, planned maintenance and more about news and events [was also highlighted by the survey.](#)

[Separate](#) reports [undertaken by the Residents Panel for the council](#) identified [similar](#) feedback and [themes](#).

The majority of ~~respondents~~ [those that responded to the survey](#) felt they were treated fairly and with respect by WHBC.

15% of respondents said they wanted to be more involved with the council, helping to scrutinise, ~~improve and shape and influence~~ housing services.

Our Commitments

In developing this strategy, we ~~have taken the~~ [took into consideration those](#) themes identified in the tenant and leaseholder survey and Resident Panel reports. ~~into consideration.~~

Our commitments will be reviewed and refined throughout the lifetime of this strategy based on data from our annual Tenant Satisfaction ~~M~~measures survey, complaints and other feedback from tenants and leaseholders.

More effective communication

- Offer information in different formats, including digitally.
- Ensure the information on the council website is useful, clear and easy to navigate.
- Engage our residents through a range of communication channels
- Provide regular opportunities for feedback

- Share updates on our services and performance

Partnership working to influence and improve services

- Create a culture where residents are actively encouraged to be involved in scrutinising, shaping and feeding back on services, ~~thus helping to improve~~ improving customer satisfaction.
- Consult with tenants on housing services to ensure meaningful worthwhile conversations and ~~the results are had and shared~~ sharing these publicly.
- Provide a simple, accessible, and prompt defined complaints process, the feedback from which will help shape and use feedback to influence future service delivery.
- Demonstrate the outcomes results of this resident influence involvement.

Widen participation

- Create ~~framework of~~ inclusive involvement opportunities to suit different needs and interests
- Ensure all residents who want to, have the opportunity to participate
- Raise awareness of our resident involvement activities
- Support resident groups and organisations
- Continue to consider what may prevent residents from becoming involved barriers to involvement and how these can be overcome.
- Improve the digital offering to widen our audience.

Celebrate our thriving communities

- ~~Offer training and community opportunities so tenants can become more resilient, less isolated and flourish.~~
- Work with partner organisations to strengthen our communities by providing information, opportunities and training.
- Support tenants residents to ~~make Neighbourhood Improvement Bids and~~ take pride in where they live through Neighbourhood Improvement Bids and community events.
- Champion our Publicise successes to our tenants, leaseholders and a wider audience
- Consider our residents at the heart of decision making

Ensure our engagement meets professional and statutory standards

- ~~Formally r~~Review the strategy after the first year, and thereafter determine the appropriate review periods and consult on our Council Housing Resident Involvement strategy every 3 years
- Provide clear governance and terms of reference for the different engagement groups.
- Treat all tenants with fairness and respect, and understand their different needs
- Continue to be inclusive and representative.

Measuring our performance

This will be done through:

- Annual collection of data from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey
- Number of residents taking up opportunities to get involved
- Regular feedback from residents
- Meeting Resident Involvement performance measures
- Outcomes of our activities will be clear, [transparent](#) and communicated effectively to residents
- Showing (formally and informally) how residents' voices have been listened to and actioned.

Keeping-Updating residents updated

- Regular reports to the Residents Panel and Neighbourhood Champions
- Articles in the Community Edit newsletter for tenants and leaseholders.
- Updates on other council media platforms
- Involvement activities and outcomes to be included in the Council's Annual Report.

Conclusion:

This Resident Involvement Strategy will inform how [Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council HBC](#) can better [communicate, listen to and](#) involve, ~~listen to and communicate with~~ residents and will help us to embed the resident voice and [lived](#) experience throughout our housing services.

By providing a variety of [activities which are](#) accessible and inclusive, ~~activities and as well as opportunities to~~ [feedback opportunities](#), we aim to increase the number of [involved](#) residents [involved](#) -and ensure they reflect our tenant and leaseholder population.

The strategy will be monitored by the Resident Involvement Manager and senior management, as well as the WHBC Residents Panel. Any amendments that are needed in due course to the strategy will be reported to Cabinet Housing Panel and Cabinet.

January 2024