

# 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 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 our tenants and leaseholders as they are well placed to tell us what works well in our housing services and what could work better.

We are committed to providing a variety of involvement opportunities ensuring all tenants and leaseholders who want to participate can do so at a commitment level they feel comfortable with.

The overall aim of the strategy is to widen involvement, using what tenants and leaseholders tell us to shape 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 with 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.
- 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.
- Work in partnership with other services in the borough to maximise the impact of our resident involvement and deliver value for money.

- Meet statutory obligations (including the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023) and regulatory standards (Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards)

## **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 and customer service were identified by respondents as areas that could be improved.

Respondents also wanted better communication around repairs, planned maintenance and more about news and events.

The majority of respondents 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 and influence housing services.

## **Our Commitments**

In developing this strategy, we have taken the themes identified in the tenant and leaseholder survey into consideration. Our commitments will be reviewed and refined throughout the lifetime of this strategy based on data from our annual Tenant Satisfaction 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 improving customer satisfaction.
- Consult with tenants on housing services to ensure meaningful conversations are had and sharing these publicly.
- Provide a simple, accessible, and prompt complaints process and use feedback to influence future service delivery.
- Demonstrate the outcomes of this resident influence.

### **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 barriers to involvement and how these can be overcome.

### **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 to make Neighbourhood Improvement Bids and take pride in where they live.
- Publicise successes to our tenants, leaseholders and a wider audience.

### **Ensure our engagement meets professional and statutory standards**

- Review 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

### **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, and communicated effectively to residents
- Showing (formally and informally) how residents' voices have been listened to and actioned.

### **Keeping residents updated**

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

### **Conclusion:**

This Resident Involvement Strategy will inform how WHBC can better 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 accessible and inclusive activities and feedback opportunities, we aim to increase the number of involved residents 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

DRAFT