

Report to Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 27th June 2023

Portfolio: Property & Housing (Cllr Holly Whitbread)

Subject: Housing Resident Involvement Strategy

Officer contact for further information: Chris Walsh Service Manager



Democratic Services Officer:

L Kirman: email: DemocraticServices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk tel:01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

The Committee considers and recommends that the draft Property & Housing Services Resident Involvement Strategy be agreed at Cabinet, as set out at Appendix Three of this report.

Report:

Background

1. The Council offers a variety of involvement opportunities for residents across the breadth of its business; however the overall aim of the draft resident involvement strategy (draft RI strategy), is to set out the approach of the Property & Housing Service toward resident involvement and how it will be delivered, supported and resourced. Whilst developed to ensure compliance with the current and future regulatory requirements of social housing providers, its primary focus is to recognise the positive role that our residents play in the design and improvement of our Property & Housing service, whilst supporting our wider commitment toward the empowerment of residents and communities.

2. The draft RI strategy provides a new framework for resident involvement, which recognises that there is no *'one size fits all'*. It sets out a wide range of engagement opportunities for residents to 'Get Involved' as much or as little as they may wish, based on their interests, time available and preferred method of communication. It provides mechanisms to encourage resident scrutiny (particularly around decision making, finances and performance), thereby ensuring the Service remains accountable to its residents. The success of the strategy depends on the Property & Housing Service developing a culture where resident involvement is viewed as a valued activity, that is embedded across all functions of the Property & Housing Service.

3. Meaningful resident involvement is viewed as a key part of delivering sustainable communities and helping to improve the quality of life of our residents. As well as giving residents a voice to shape future decisions and improve services, on an individual level such involvement provides opportunity for people to make social connections and lasting friendships, reduce loneliness, boost confidence and generate a sense of wellbeing. By working in partnership with residents we are stronger together and more able to achieve our vision to "create great places where people want to live".

4. The social housing landscape has been, and continues to be, shaped dramatically by a number of shifting elements, including central government policy, availability of new technology, pressure on finances and the need to service a changing population, all of which has been accelerated by societal turning points, such as the Grenfell Fire and the coronavirus pandemic. Consequently, the resident involvement arena looks very different now to how it did under the previous Tenant Participation strategy.

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England:

5. The **Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)** regulates registered providers of social housing to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector, which is able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. The regulatory framework for social housing in England is based on three economic standards and four consumer standards that all registered social housing providers must adhere to. This includes the **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment (Consumer) Standard 2017**, which sets expectations for registered social housing providers to provide choice, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants, to have a clear approach to complaints, and to provide a wide range of opportunities for tenants to have influence and be involved. The RSH's role is to intervene where there has been a failure to meet the standards, which has caused, or could have caused, serious harm to tenants.

6. In 2020, Government published its **White Paper "The Charter for Social Housing Residents"**, setting out to raise the standard of social housing and meet the aspirations of residents throughout the country, both today and into the future. The Charter covers seven key themes as follows:

1. To be safe in your home,
2. To know how your landlord is performing,
3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,
4. To be treated with respect,
5. To have your voice heard by your landlord,
6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in,
7. To be supported to take your first step to ownership.

7. Whilst resident involvement runs throughout the White Paper, of particular relevance to the draft RI strategy is Chapter Five, "*To have your voice heard by your landlord*", which requires landlords to ensure that residents are a key part of their governance and that consumer-led assurance arrangements are in place. Tenants who do not wish to attend formal meetings or join a formal group must have ways to feed back to their landlord, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their needs identified, with landlords tailoring their engagement opportunities.

8. The paper places an expectation on the RSH to require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually encourage, improve and support engagement with their social housing tenants.

9. Furthermore, information will be published annually by the RSH and made available to tenants on how their landlord is performing in key areas of service delivery, in accordance with a new suite of 22 tenant satisfaction measures (paragraph 10, refers). In addition, there will be a stronger role for the RSH, particularly in relation to the consumer standards which will include a new periodic inspection programme.

10. The Regulator for Social Housing published its new Tenant Satisfaction Measures standard on 21st September 2022, which means that from 1st April 2023 all social housing providers must collect and publish a wide range of performance information. There are

22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures, covering complaints, neighbourhood, anti-social behaviour, repairs and safety. Ten of these will be measured by landlords directly, and 12 will be measured by landlords carrying out tenant perception surveys. Although landlords are already required to give tenants timely and relevant performance information, including the publication of an annual report, the format and content of this information can vary significantly. These measures will be reported from April 2023 and will give tenants transparent and meaningful information about their landlord, and will also help the RSH ensure that landlords meet the new consumer standards.

11. **The Building Safety Act 2022** received royal assent on 28 April 2022 and is a hugely significant piece of legislation which overhauls the way residential buildings are constructed and maintained in the UK following the Grenfell Tower disaster in 2017, while protecting the rights of leaseholders.

12. Of particular relevance to the draft RI strategy are the provisions which relate to engagement with residents. Whilst not yet in force, providers of social housing will be required to have in place, resident engagement strategies that allow residents to obtain information and be consulted on matters and decisions affecting the safety of their building, thereby ensuring that residents are empowered to play an effective role in ensuring their building is, and continues to be safe. Whilst this requirement, currently, applies only to landlords managing or owning higher-risk buildings, the Council views it as good practice to engage, thereby future proofing across its entire housing stock.

13. Whilst the draft RI strategy pays regard to the Building Safety Act, it is our intention to adopt a separate resident engagement strategy in respect of building safety, which will set out the Council's approach to resident engagement generally in this area. Further, for each high-risk building, there will be a tailored resident engagement strategy which may be reviewed and approved by the Building Safety Regulator as part of its statutory role as may be required.

14. On 8th June 2022, Government published its **Social Housing (Regulation) Bill**, putting into law a host of reforms to the regulation of the social housing sector. The aim of the Bill is to have "*more people living in decent, well looked-after homes enjoying the quality of life they deserve*". In summary the bill proposes to:

- levy unlimited fines on failing social housing providers
- drive up standards and bolster the regulator's powers to act
- give tenants the right to obtain information from landlords
- give tenants the right to rate the services provided by landlords
- tackle damp and cold living conditions
- subject social landlords to Ofsted-style inspections.

15. Other relevant statutory requirements are found at appendix one.

The Local Context

16. The Council's mission for the District is to work together to serve our community, putting our customers at the heart of everything we do and focusing on the things that matter most to local people (EFDC Corporate Plan 2018 – 2023, refers). The Council's key corporate objectives are that:

- People live longer, healthier and independent lives
- Adults and children are supported in times of need
- People and communities achieve their full potential

- Delivering effective core services that people want
- Improving the district housing offer

17. The Council produces a Housing Strategy which is kept under review, and sets out priorities and objectives for Housing Services, including tenant and leaseholder involvement. The vision for the overarching Housing Strategy (2022-2027) is that “Epping Forest will be a place that has safe, decent and good quality housing, of an appropriate mix of sizes, types and tenure, that meet the local needs of those who want to live in the District”. Its key priorities are:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- Promoting health wellbeing and independence
- Economic growth and regeneration
- Quality and standards
- Protecting and enhancing the environment

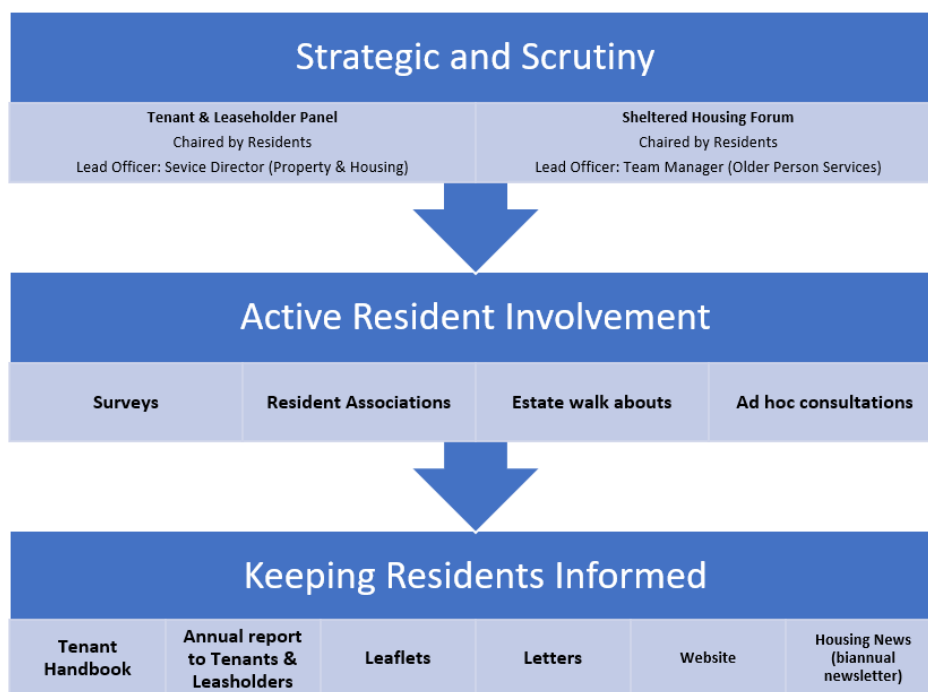
The draft RI Strategy supports the Council’s corporate and service wide ambitions.

18. Historically, the Council’s housing management service has been delivered by geographical teams, however more recently these services have been delivered through specialist workstreams, removing conflicting priorities and allowing staff to focus on critical functions such as resident involvement. Following the Council’s restructure in 2019, the Resident Involvement function (Property & Housing Services) was transferred to the Tenancy & Estate Management team 19th of June 2023.

19. A Peer Review, commission by the Council in March 2019, undertaken by the East of England Local Government Association (LGA), found the Council’s existing resident involvement framework to be limited and recommended that it be reviewed, and additional resources considered.

20. The resident involvement framework under the outgoing ‘Tenant Participation Strategy’, is described in figure one. It was recognised that only a small number of our 6,500 tenants and 1,050 leaseholders are actively involved in formal / active resident involvement activities and the framework should be refreshed to provide a modern, inclusive, tailored suite of engagement opportunities to better meet the needs of our customers, the business and in order to satisfy our statutory obligations.

21. Figure One: Framework for Resident Involvement under outgoing the Tenant Participation Strategy:



22. Under the existing strategy, Tenants and Leaseholders views are represented by the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, which formed in 2019 when the former Tenants’ Panel and the Leaseholder Association amalgamated to become one group following waning attendance. Its role is to take an independent detailed look at how the Property & Housing Service is performing, and to carry out in-depth reviews of various aspects of the service. Residents of the District’s sheltered housing schemes are represented by a Sheltered Housing Forum.

23. At a more local level, there are currently five active, recognised resident-led Associations operating within the District, namely: Limes Farm Community Group (Chigwell), Chapel Road Residents Association (Epping), Romeland Residents Association (Waltham Abbey), People of Roydon and Roundhills Residents Association (Waltham Abbey). Each group has a signed constitution which is approved by the Council, and which sets out its function, membership and how it will operate.

24. Tenants and Leaseholders are kept informed through the Council’s website, housing information leaflets and publicity documents.

25. The Council undertakes independent tenant satisfaction survey (STAR survey, paragraph 28 refers) every three years. This will change in the financial year as the government has moved to tenant satisfaction measures (TSM), the Council are currently in engagement with several companies to provide these measures and the intend to publish findings in accordance to legislation.

Creating a new model of Resident Involvement for Property & Housing Services

26. During the period October 2020 – September 2021, Officers worked with colleagues across the Service and with residents to understand what ‘good’ involvement looks like, to identify opportunities for involvement and to further our understanding of how EFDC residents prefer to be involved. Officers joined a best practice networking group and attended relevant conferences, taking time to understand best practice within the sector. Interested residents volunteered to join a Resident Involvement Co-Creation group to help shape a new model of resident involvement which better meets the needs and wants of customers and the business, as well as fulfilling current and future regulatory requirements. Alongside this, a combination of digital and ‘*in person*’ involvement opportunities were piloted to help inform our future approach.

27. The draft RI strategy has been created collaboratively with the Resident Involvement Co-creation Group, who are a group of residents and staff, passionate about resident involvement, sharing a desire to continuously improve the way our residents are involved. The draft RI strategy is endorsed by the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.

28. To better understand what our residents think, the Property & Housing Service undertook a customer satisfaction survey between January 2020 – April 2020 using the industry Star methodology. This survey focused specially on our Tenants and Leaseholders. The results from the 2020 STAR survey were positive, with the survey finding high levels of satisfaction with a number of aspects of the Service including the value for money of the rent (90%), and that EFDC Housing Service provides homes that are safe and secure (91%) – all of which are reflected in the finding that 87% of tenants are satisfied with the overall services provided by EFDC Housing Service.

29. Slightly lower levels of satisfaction were found particularly relating to communication issues, with opportunities to make views known, listening to views and acting upon them among the lower ratings. Eight out of ten tenants (81%) were satisfied that the Housing Service kept them informed about things which might affect them. However, fewer tenants were satisfied with opportunities to make views known (68%) or that the Council listens to their views and acts upon them (57%).

30. Tenants were also asked how they wanted to be involved with the EFDC Housing Service. Whilst 82% said they did not want to be involved, a number of tenants did express an interest in the following options (table one, refers).

31. Table One: Summary of responses from residents expressing desire to be involved:

Method or Involvement	% of Resident respondents
Not interested in getting involved	82
Armchair Reviewer	10
Mystery shopper	9
Tenant & Leaseholder Panel	9
Tenant Working Party	7
Website	6
Social Media	6
Other	5

32. The survey found that half of the tenants surveyed used the internet on a daily, or almost daily basis (52%) with a further 11% using it weekly. Whilst some use it less frequently, in all, 72% of tenants use it at some time. However, there was a marked difference between the tenures. 74% of general needs tenants said they used the internet (54% daily), whilst just 47% of sheltered tenants use the internet (30% daily). When asked why tenants didn't use the internet, 259 tenants gave an answer, and of those, 107 told us they did not want to use it. A similar number gave 'other' reasons such as old age, and 22 said they lacked the skills, but very few cited cost of equipment or connection as the reason.

33. Overall, insight from the Star Survey highlighted a need to rethink our approach to involvement to ensure that it is fit for the future and designed with residents and their voice at its heart.

A New Strategy for Resident Involvement (Property & Housing Services)

The Vision:

34. Our vision for the Property and Housing Service is to “*Create Great Places Where People Want to Live*”. In order to do this, we must listen to what our residents want. We asked our Co-Creation Group of involved residents to tell us what good resident involvement looked like to them and adopted these principles in the development of the draft RI strategy.

What does good resident involvement look like to our residents?:

35. The Resident Involvement Co-creation Group agreed that effective resident engagement promotes a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants and their landlord. It exists when these interests work together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services. The group agreed seven key principles of what “*good*” resident involvement looks like to them, summarised below:

1. That tenants and leaseholders are placed at the heart of everything the landlord does;
2. Information is provided to residents in a timely manner about services and decisions which may affect them;
3. That the views of residents are actively sought and respected by the Council;
4. That sufficient opportunity is offered for residents to be involved in ways that suit

- them, at all different levels;
5. That residents are able to influence decision-making, shape future services and hold their landlord to account;
 6. That residents are helped to understand the impact of their involvement, how their contribution informs decision making and helps to shape services;
 7. That outcomes following a resident involvement activity are always communicated back to residents and any positive news or achievements are celebrated.

36. These principles translate into a new definition for resident involvement, as created by the Co-Creation group in January 2022:

“Resident Involvement means the opportunity for tenants and leaseholders to influence decision-making and help shape the Property & Housing services that are provided to them. It encourages two-way communication, leading to agreed actions, providing opportunity for tenants, leaseholders and other residents to hold the Council’s landlord function to account. It improves social connections and contributes to the overall health and wellbeing of participants, as well as neighbours who benefit from improvements to their neighbourhood”.

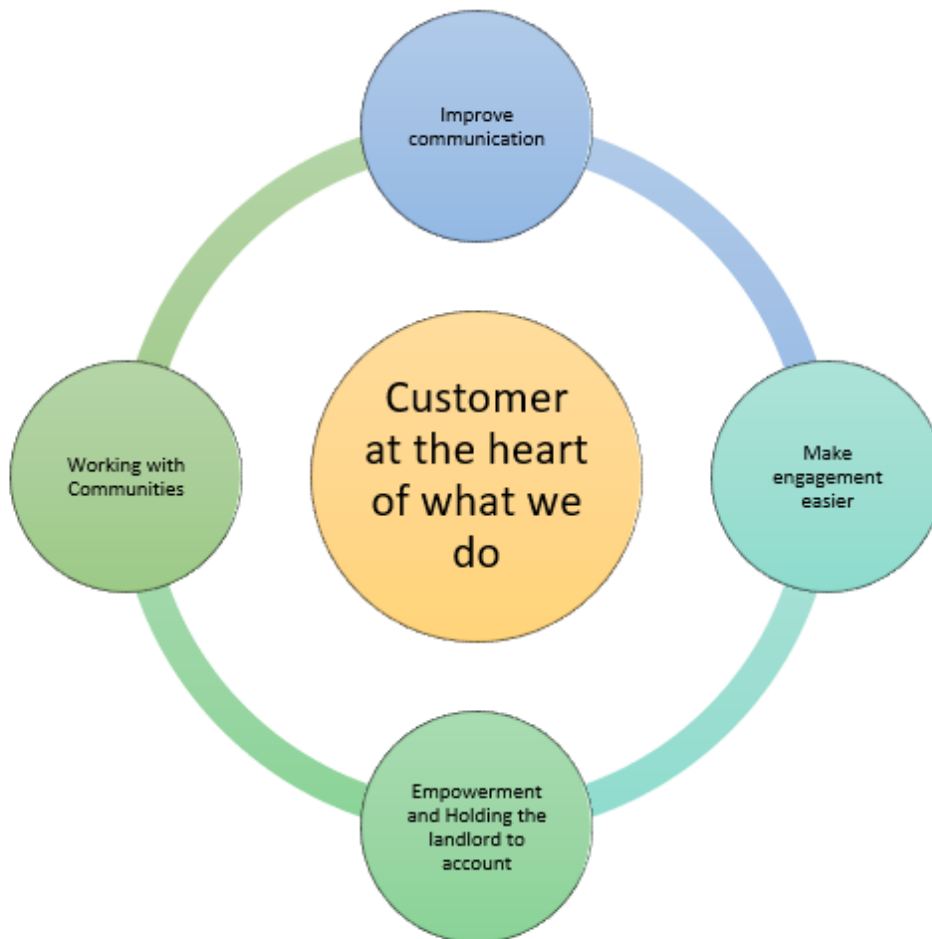
37. The Co-Create Group and Tenant & Leaseholder Panel were clear that the draft RI strategy should be referred to as the *Resident* Involvement Strategy (Property & Housing Services), as it was felt that naming it the ‘Tenant and Leaseholder’ Involvement Strategy was less inclusive and did not align with the intentions of the Charter for Social Housing Residents in reducing stigma, nor would it properly describe the relationship the Council has with wider residents who receive or are impacted by Property & Housing services but who do not have a contractual relationship with the Council.

With the Housing Service funded by tenants and leaseholders, it is only right that these same residents should have the final say over decisions that affect them - with regard also paid to the views of wider residents, where they too will be affected.

Aims

38. The overall aims of the draft RI strategy are divided into five key areas (figure two, refers).

39. Figure Two: Five Aims of Draft RI Strategy:



Aim One: Residents at the heart of what we do.

40. This aim underlines our view of our residents as partners in delivering the Strategy outcomes. We want to ensure that our plans, decisions and actions are made with *your* hopes and ambitions first and foremost in mind.

41. Leading from the very top of our organisation, we will work hard to create a resident involvement culture which values the positive contribution, that involved residents play, in the provision of our Property & Housing Services.

How will we achieve this?

42. In 2014, the Council adopted a set of agreed values and behaviours, which underpin our organisational culture. Our five values set the expectations on how we will work with each other and our residents to achieve our vision and includes Trust; One Team; Performance; Innovation; Customer.

43. With special regard to Customer, we agreed to *“put the customer at the heart of everything we do and to provide services that are tailored to the different needs of our communities”*. We will expand this core value as follows, we will *“put the customer at the heart of everything we do, provide services that are tailored to the different needs of our*

communities and to value the positive contribution that involved residents play in the provision of Property & Housing Services”.

44. Embedding resident involvement as a standard practice and expectation of all members of the Property & Housing Service, will require a change of culture, which will be led from the top of the organisation.

45. Existing staff and elected Members will be equipped with the training and appropriate resources to support resident involvement activities. We will build resident involvement into future staff induction programmes and will develop appropriate mandatory online training tools to raise the profile of resident involvement and ensure everyone is aware of the benefits and outcomes it brings.

46. Residents will be consulted right from the start of each new project or key decision and their views will be heard and acted upon, right up until a service is delivered. We will continue to listen and respond to the resident’s voice for as long as our service continues.

47. The Housing Sector is constantly changing, with a range of new legislation, best practice and guidance being published. We will aim to provide residents with regular updates to help them understand any changes which may affect them; to explain the Council’s responsibilities and where required any response to these changes and promote how residents can take part in national conversations. We will have a separate strategy for ensuring that residents are driving the response to plans in relation to building regulations and fire safety. Outcomes, following a resident involvement activity, will be communicated back to residents and any positive news or achievements celebrated.

Aim Two: Making engagement easier

48. We want to make it as easy as possible for resident’s voices to be heard and for residents to have a say on housing matters which affect them.

How will we achieve this?

49. We will refresh our Tenant and Leaseholder Census, to better understand who our residents are and how they wish to be involved. This will enable us to tailor our engagement opportunities and make it easier for residents to be involved.

50. Provision of a wide-ranging suite of options for involvement that make use of successful traditional methods and embracing more innovative and/or digital engagement opportunities will enable residents to pick and choose the activities that suit them, giving them options as to how and when they wish to participate.

51. Residents will be encouraged to take part in as many involvement opportunities as they wish. Whilst many of the activities require no specialist knowledge, there are some opportunities that we know residents may appreciate some training or additional support. Where this is the case and to boost participants’ confidence, we will provide training, create support networks, and hold special events.

52 The introduction of a new housing management computer system, which features an interactive customer portal, will make it easier for us to engage with residents and for residents to provide us feedback. Feedback will be used to identify trends, which will help us to continuously improve the services we provide.

53. Where barriers to using digital technology exist, we will aim to ensure that activities are

varied, accessible and inclusive. Wherever possible, we will look to use a mixture of engagement tools to capture a broad range of views, in turn making it easier for residents to be involved whatever their circumstances. In addition, our team of trained Digital Champions will be on hand to support residents to become involved digitally. For some specific resident involvement activities, where available we will loan smart tablets to enable participation.

Aim three: Resident empowerment & holding the landlord to account

54. We value the role that our empowered residents play in service delivery. We believe that our tenants and leaseholders should be kept informed about how we are performing, what decisions we are making, how we spend our income and should have opportunity to challenge us and tell us where they feel improvements are needed.

How will we achieve this?

55. By working with residents to understand what performance measures are important to them and by reporting back to them against our performance of those measures.

56. Providing residents with a clear breakdown of how our income is being spent, so that they can challenge us if they think our expenditure is not providing value for money, or if our income is not being spent on matters which matter most to them.

57. Ensuring that feedback from all resident involvement activities flows through local and strategic groups, making certain that resident voices are integrated in service planning, monitoring and improvement.

58. By publishing information on complaints, including lessons learnt, trends and how these have been used to improve our services. We will also publish findings from any consultations, tenant satisfaction surveys and mystery shopping exercises and will work with residents to raise standards where necessary.

59. We will refresh our existing Housing Service Standards, considering what matters most to residents and will report back to residents annually on those standards.

60. We aim to provide opportunities for residents to become empowered to have input into and responsibility for decision making. Our resident-led strategic Panels will consider how well we are complying with the Social Housing Regulator's Consumer Standards and other key statutory obligations. They will look at overall performance and will make recommendations for further scrutiny and how our services may be improved.

61. We will increase the number of resident representatives on the Select Committee for Communities, ensuring that our Member Councillors make key policy decisions with the tenant's voice in mind.

62. We will develop resident involvement opportunities in new areas such as scrutiny, complaints, procurement and recruitment.

63. At a local level, we will consult residents on the scope and delivery of local projects and will seek feedback, which will be published widely for residents to view. We will keep residents informed against progress made and will provide opportunities for resident scrutiny.

Aim Four: Improving communication

64. We are seeking to create open and clear communication channels between the Property & Housing Service and our residents. Whether residents are looking to provide feedback, make a complaint, or simply want to report a repair we are aiming to make communication as easy as possible for our residents.

How will we achieve this?

65. We will make it as easy as possible for residents to communicate with us by whatever means they choose.

66. Also, by producing a range of communications to keep residents informed. We will work with residents to understand what information residents want to know and ensure that our communications are easy to understand, respectful and strike the right tone.

Our new computer system will enable us to interact with residents more effectively, allowing us to tailor resident involvement opportunities to individuals or groups of residents, take quick polls and run surveys.

67. We intend to provide a range of opportunities, including in-person events and online meetings, where residents can speak directly to staff and Managers and make their views known.

68. We will deliver interactive online webinars and engaging communications such as magazines, leaflets and social media, which will include contributions from residents themselves.

69. We are going to build a new engaging website which will promote the new ways that residents can “*Get Involved*” and will advertise forthcoming events and involvement opportunities, as they arise. The website will showcase projects, keep residents informed about matters which affect them and celebrate good news stories and successes among other things.

70. We will develop a “*you said, we did*” approach to feedback. To show you how residents contributions shape the services we deliver, we will share this regularly with you through our newsletter, social media and website.

Aim Five: Working with our communities

71. We want to work with our residents to “*Create Great Places Where People Want to Live*”, where our Council housing and estates are viewed as privileged parts of the District and that residents are proud to call home.

How will we achieve this?

72. We will work with community representatives to bring about the changes that residents want most, by working closely with existing Residents’ Associations and by empowering Champions to represent their communities. We will promote and facilitate the development of new empowered Residents’ Groups across the District.

73. We aim to get to know our communities well, by regularly seeking feedback about their neighbourhoods. Feedback will be used to shape future priorities.

74. Activities such as Estate Inspections and Growing Projects will position residents as central participants and resident engagement opportunities will be introduced throughout a tenancy, starting with ‘Meet Your Neighbour’ events in new-build properties and through the

whole range of “Ways to Get Involved”.

75. By continuing to build strong links with our partners and local voluntary groups to deliver projects to the benefit of our residents and the wider community.

76. It is our hope that taking part in resident involvement activities will provide a range of benefits to participants that are separate and fall outside of the direct influence on services. It is anticipated that these benefits may lead to increased confidence, social connections and even new skills to add to a CV. The benefits to residents can be even greater than to the Property & Housing Service itself.

77. We will expand on the collaborative work already being undertaken between the Property & Housing Services and Communities, Culture & Wellbeing teams, to support the health and wellbeing of our residents. Further, recognising the synergy between the Services regarding resident involvement, we will work collaboratively to support each other in the provision of resident involvement opportunities across the District.

79. Final outcomes from resident involvement activities will be reported to residents via the Annual Resident Involvement Impact Report. The report will detail which involvement activities represented the greatest impact and best value.

New Framework for Resident Involvement

80. Our new framework for resident involvement recognises that there is no ‘*one size fits all*’ for involvement and provides a suite of opportunities for residents to ‘*Get Involved*’ as little or as much as they wish, and at all levels, based on personal interests, expertise, time available and preferred communication channels. In many cases, involvement will be specifically tailored to meet the needs and wishes of our residents.

81. The resultant suite of options (figure three, refers) shows the wide range of ways we will work with, listen to and act upon residents’ views and how residents can directly influence decision making. This will not be an exhaustive list and is likely to expand and evolve through continuous improvement and innovation. Feedback from all resident involvement activities will flow through local and strategic groups to ensure that resident voices are integrated in service planning, monitoring and improvement.

82. **Appendix two**, provides a glossary of the proposed resident involvement opportunities under the new framework, together with an explanation of function, who can be involved, training available, as well as detailing the inter-relationships between the forums / activities.

83. Figure Three: New Framework for Resident Involvement:

Stronger Communities Select Committee					Purple Tier opportunities place residents at the centre of Council Member decision making processes.
Tenant & Leaseholder Panel					Panels in the Yellow Tier act as a consultative and decision-making body.
Fire & Building Safety Panel	Scrutiny Panels	Focus Groups (Strategic/ Policy Matters)	Continuous Improvement Groups	Sheltered Housing Forum	Green Tier activities provide you with an opportunity to help review and shape the overall Property & Housing Service.
Complaints Scrutiny Panel	Recruitment Champions	Procurement Champions			
Estate Walkabouts	Resident Inspectors	Block/ Street Champions	Growing Champions	Meet Your Neighbour events	Orange Tier ranges from face to face, in-person activities to activities that you can engage with from the comfort of your own home.
Community Champions	Resident Writers	Armchair Reviewers	Mystery Shoppers	Annual Residents Confernece	
Information Stations/ Informal Pop Ups	Surveys/ Polls/Focus Groups (Operational Matters)	Chatterbox Live/Online	Residents Associations	Community Events	Blue Tier opportunities enable residents to take part in one-off (or infrequent) events, as and when they wish to do so.
Social Media	Ad-hoc newsletters, leaflets, publicity	Webinars	Estate based consultation	Other consultation	Pink tier lists ways you can stay informed.
Handbooks	Annual RI Impact Assessment	Bi-Annual Newsletter	Complaints Reporting	Annual Report to Tenants & Leaseholders	Grey Tier shows the formal reporting/ information distribution which will serve to demonstrate how all of our activities are helping to shape the Property and Housing Service.

84. When preparing the draft RI strategy and at the specific request of both the Resident Involvement Co-Create Group and Tenant & Leaseholder Panel, Officers have deviated from the Council’s standard strategy template format, in favour of a shorter, more engaging, easy to read document. The draft RI strategy is presented at **Appendix Three**.

85. In view of the importance of this strategy, an external consultant was appointed to act as a critical friend throughout its development, to ensure that the draft RI strategy meets current and future regulatory requirements and industry best practice.

Measuring Impact

86. We will record the outcomes from every resident involvement activity and using an assessment tool called an "Impact Assessment", we will evaluate the effect of resident involvement and the difference it makes to services provided by the Property & Housing Service. These assessments will allow us to demonstrate to our residents the changes that have been made as a direct consequence of their involvement and will allow us to identify which involvement activities represent greatest impact and best value.

Resident Involvement Impact Assessments

87. Team Managers will record all resident involvement activities undertaken by their Teams on a monthly basis using a standard proforma, recording the following:

- Type of involvement: This explains the purpose of the activity and who was involved.
- Outcomes: The changes that have been made / taken place following the activity (if any); survey findings from participants.
- Value for Money: A record of staff time and cost in relation to the activity.

These reports will be presented to the Resident Involvement Continuous Improvement Group on a quarterly basis, who will make an assessment against each activity in terms of i) Impact and ii) Value for Money. Findings from the Continuous Improvement Group will be presented at Service Performance Management Meetings and used to determine which activities add value / improve services and therefore should be continued or discontinued.

88. We will use this intelligence as a platform to understand who our involved residents are and to identify under-representation. We will work with our residents to remove barriers to engagement and encourage future engagement from the diverse communities that we serve.

89. An annual resident involvement activity impact assessment report will be published and made available to all residents on the Council's website / social media. A paper copy of the report will be available on request.

90. We will continue to seek out best practice so that we can continuously improve how we involve our tenants, leaseholders and residents living on Council-owned housing estates. This will enable us to be more flexible and become adaptable to a changing environment if we need to.

Consultation, Information, and Involvement – Statutory Requirement

91. The way in which tenants will be consulted, informed, and involved will be set out in:

- a) The Epping Forest District-Wide Tenant Participation Agreement*
- b) The Resident Involvement section of the Council's website; and
- c) The Annual Report to Tenants.

*Participation agreements are also made between the Council and the Epping Forest Sheltered Housing Forum, and all Council recognised Resident Association groups in the District.

Review and monitoring

92. In view of its strategic importance, the resident involvement strategy is to be adopted by the Council's Cabinet, following pre-scrutiny by the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel and the Council's Communities Select Committee. However, responsibility for the delivery of the strategy rests with the elected Housing Portfolio Holder and the Director of Property & Housing.

93. An important part of the strategy is its Key Action Plan. The strategy's first Key Action Plan is set out at Appendix Three. Subsequent Key Action Plans will be produced on an annual basis and will be approved by the elected Housing Portfolio Holder, on the recommendation of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel and Communities Select Committee, who will consider the draft Key Action Plan in detail.

94. The Tenant and Leaseholder Panel and Resident Involvement Co-Create group will regularly review the progress made towards this strategy. The Strategy itself will be reviewed during 2027, or earlier if the need for significant revisions is identified.

Resource implications:

95. To make sure that support and resources are available for effective involvement, we will provide grants to recognised Residents Associations to help with their set up, running costs and subscriptions for video conferencing platforms, as well as making available an annual budget allocation to fund minor estate enhancements.

96. We will develop a clear expenses, incentives and rewards policy for involvement and will provide/arrange transport to and from venues for formal involvement where residents are unable to do so themselves.

97. We will provide appropriate staff to support involvement activities. The Property & Housing Resident Involvement team will consist of:

- 1 FTE Team Manager (Tenancy & Estate Management)
- 1 FTE Resident Involvement Officer (Tenancy & Estate Management Team)
- 1 FTE Resident Involvement Officer (Regeneration and Development)

98. The Property & Housing Resident Involvement team will have oversight of all work being undertaken under the framework for Property & Housing resident involvement, ensuring that support is provided to residents and service areas on effective and meaningful engagement through providing:

- Information, advice and guidance,
- Training,
- Practical and administrative support to all strategic resident involvement panels and forums,
- Management of funding applications pursuant to recognised resident associations,
- Managing the content of the resident involvement micro-site and social media pages

99. The Property & Housing Resident Involvement team will support work relating to performance, scrutiny and service improvement, ensuring that the voices of our residents

are heard and are shaping the improvement efforts of the Service. However, the following specific lead officer roles will be held by the following posts:

- Lead Officer to the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel - Service Director (Property & Housing),
- Lead Officer to the Fire and Building Safety Panel - Head of Asset Strategy
- Lead Officer to the Sheltered Housing Forum – Team Manager for Older Person Services

100. In addition to the core Resident Involvement team, there will be an expectation on Team Managers to ensure customer-centric services within their own work area and demonstrate how tenants and leaseholders are given a voice. How each team will achieve this will be set out in their annual Team Plans. Team Managers will act as Lead Officers for any Focus Group or similar within their own area of expertise.

Ultimately, supporting residents and actively seeking opportunity to involve residents will be the responsibility of all Officers and will be reflected in the role profiles of all customer-facing posts and evidenced at individual one to one performance meetings.

101. Property & Housing Services will work in partnership with Communities, Culture & Wellbeing Teams whose staff will independently and collaboratively support resident involvement opportunities, as well as promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion across the District.

102. Further, we will provide dedicated financial resources and equipment to support those resident involvement activities referred to in this Strategy. The budget allocated will cover activities such as (not an exclusive list); resident training, hire of venues, resident travel expenses, new equipment, conferences, grants and hospitality for events. This budget will be kept under review as the new Strategy is implemented.

Legal and Governance Implications:

103. In summary, there is a statutory requirement to involve residents in the services that the Property & Housing Service provides and its governance (paragraphs 5 – 15 and **Appendix one** of this report, refers).

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

104. The draft RI Strategy ensures that residents are placed at the heart of decision making, thereby supporting the Council's wider objectives around the safer, cleaner, greener agenda. In key areas such as Building and Fire Safety, the strategy will serve to support the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligations, whilst at the same time helping residents to feel safe in their homes.

Reason for decision:

To agree a new strategy and framework for involving residents, which recognises the positive role that our residents play in the design and improvement of our Property & Housing Service, which supports our wider commitment toward the empowerment of residents and communities, ensures compliance with the current and future regulatory requirements of social housing providers and supports the Council's ambition to create great places where people want to live.

Options considered and rejected:

- (1) To continue to operate the existing strategy and framework for resident involvement as agreed under the previous tenant participation strategy.
- (2) To agree a different approach to resident involvement.

Consultation undertaken:

105. The Portfolio Holder – Housing and Communities, the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel and Resident Involvement Co-Create Group, Officers and Members have been consulted and have responded positively to the draft RI Strategy.

A wider public consultation was undertaken between 5th December 2022 and 22nd January 2023, the findings of which are attached as Appendix Five and are noted to be, on the whole, a positive response to the proposed strategy.

Resource implications:

106. Given the new resident involvement strategy will use the current resources within Housing namely, Tenancy & Estate Management we do not expect there to any further financial strain on budgets beyond those budgets already allocated.

Legal and Governance Implications, Relevant Statutory Powers:

107. In summary, there is a statutory requirement to involve residents in the services that the Property & Housing Service provides and its governance (paragraphs 5 – 15 and **Appendix one** of this report, refers).

Corporate Plan Implications:

108. This strategy is integral to the corporate plan and ensuring we put residents at the heart of everything we do, as well as creating places people want to live.

Background Papers:

Appendix Five: Results of Staff, Members and Public Consultation.

Risk Management:

110. The key risk associated with the non-delivery of this strategy is:

Name of Risk:	Risk:
Standards of Tenant Involvement and Empowerment	<p>Failure to deliver, leading to non-delivery of this strategy and/or breaches of regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Failure to consult, involve and empower residents to participate in service delivery could lead to mistrust, poor services and lower sustainability of communities.</p> <p>Reputational risk of not engaging residents.</p>
Risk Consequences:	Management and Mitigation
<p>Regulator Scrutiny and Intervention where there has been a failure to meet the Consumer Standards or could have caused, serious harm to tenants. In cases of serious detriment, this could result in a regulatory notice being published against the Council.</p> <p>Decisions are made without having full sight of resident opinion.</p> <p>Opportunities lost through poor reputation</p>	<p>Training and empowerment of staff and Members to deliver this strategy</p> <p>A commitment to reviewing the resources required to adequately resource the Strategy year on year</p> <p>Local teams delivering local activities and engaging residents</p> <p>A wide range of formal and informal involvement opportunities at all different levels</p> <p>A commitment to embedding resident involvement in everything we do</p> <p>Regular resident communications in a variety of formats</p> <p>By regularly monitoring the delivery of the strategy with our residents and the outcomes and impact of resident involvement activities</p> <p>By understanding who our customers are and their preferences</p> <p>Using technology and insights to reach as many residents as we can.</p>

Equality:

111. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out and there was no significant impact. Please see **appendix four** for full detail.

Key Decision: (if required): Agree framework for the new Strategy and accompanying documents.