

HOUSING RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Meeting: **Executive**

Date Of Meeting: **13 February 2025**

Report Author(s): **Rosalynn Funnell**

Lead Officer: **Louise Strongitharm | louise.strongitharm@woking.gov.uk**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Ian Johnson | cllrian.johnson@woking.gov.uk**

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Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy to the Executive. This is presented with the recommendation that the Strategy is endorsed by the Executive for recommendation to Council for formal approval.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to also celebrate the progress and current work occurring between the housing volunteers (tenants/leaseholders) and Resident Engagement Team from February 2024 onwards.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL THAT

- i. **The Housing Resident Engagement Strategy be approved.**

3.0 Proposal and Outcome

- 3.1 The decision will ensure Regulatory Compliance to the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards.
- 3.2 The decision will ensure that there is a focus on Housing Resident Engagement, its importance, key areas of focus and the baseline of engagement opportunities that Woking Borough Council Housing Service commit to providing between 2025 and 2028.
- 3.3 Monitoring of the strategy and how the objectives will be achieved have been outlined within the strategy. Resident Engagement KPIs will be important in informing the success.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The Housing Resident Engagement Team was formally set up with the employment of the Resident Engagement Team Leader from February 2024. Housing Resident Engagement was limited prior to this.
- 4.2 To support Regulatory Compliance to the Consumer Standards, the Resident Engagement Team have been working closely with Residents and Volunteers to achieve a significant amount since February 2024. This includes:
 - a. Code of conduct implemented for volunteers.
 - b. Resident and Landlord Partnership Terms of Reference and meeting paper templates implemented.
 - c. Volunteer numbers have increased from 3 volunteers (June 2024) to 16 volunteers (December 2024).
 - d. Volunteers have volunteered 254.5 hours from April 2024 to December 2024.
 - e. 2x volunteer training sessions held.
 - f. Resident and Landlord Partnership Panel have had consistent monthly meetings since April 2024. Key focuses included stock condition surveys, the Housing Improvement Programme, Housing Communications, 30-year business plan and Scrutiny of performance.
 - g. 23x Resident Engagement events have been held since April 2024 until December 2024. This includes panel meetings, focus groups, community events, training sessions and workshops. Some key events include:
 - Byfleet Focus Group
 - Hartshill Walk Window Replacement Breakfast Event
 - WBC Website Focus Group with Invuse
 - Lakeview Focus Group
 - Lakeview Fire Safety Events
 - Sheerwater Focus Group
 - Housing Communications Focus Group with WBC Marcomms
 - 3x Summer Community Events working with multiple stakeholders
 - Resident Engagement Strategy workshops
 - h. In 2024, the Resident Engagement Team worked with Invuse to provide consultation opportunities for volunteers, tenants, leaseholders and residents on the Council website project.

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- i. Focus Group Action plan has completed 32 actions. One key concern raised was regarding communal bin stores. Due to the feedback across focus groups, WBC Housing Service are working with the Neighbourhoods team and Joint Waste Solutions to carry out a Communal bin review on all social housing properties.
- j. First Tenant Satisfaction Survey went out to all residents for the 2023-2024 reporting year. This was reported back to the Regulator and published to Residents.
- k. The Woking@Home Newsletter format was updated following resident feedback on Housing Communications. The Newsletter is now proof-read and approved by the Housing Volunteers.
- l. The Resident and Landlord Partnership Panel have approved a stamp 'checked by residents for residents' which assures tenants/leaseholders that the Housing Volunteers have proof-read and approved the communication, newsletter, policy and strategy being implemented. This is the first step in ensuring housing communications are easy to read for residents.
- m. Transactional surveys remain in place for a number of service areas within housing.
- n. There are 8 Engagement Opportunities currently available and built on since April 2024. This is outlined in the strategy.

4.3 The Team and volunteers have worked extremely hard to begin building a better relationship with residents in contact with the housing service. The results of the 2023-2024 Tenant Satisfaction Survey outline the need for better transparency, accountability and influence.

4.4 The Resident Engagement and Consultation workstream is part of the Housing Improvement Programme which leads into the Improvement and Recovery Plan. The workstream has had an aim for a Housing Resident Engagement Strategy to be implemented. To support progress on housing service improvements, it is imperative that the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy is implemented and actions are carried out.

5.0 Options Considered

5.1 It was felt a Housing Resident Engagement Strategy was the best course of action to ensure compliance and a baseline for engagement opportunities.

5.2 The Residents and Housing Volunteers were consulted on and involved in the development of the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy. Residents have confirmed the vision and objectives in a series of workshops. This strategy has been requested by the Resident and Landlord Partnership Panel (RLP) to provide a structure for engagement opportunities. The strategy has also been endorsed by the RLP who have co-created it.

5.3 A self-assessment against the TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) National Engagement Standards 2024 was considered to be included within the Resident Engagement Strategy. However, it was felt that this self-assessment and

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accompanying action plan would be more suitable to occur after the strategy's implementation. This would also provide more time to ensure higher levels of consultation with residents on the 7 aspects highlighted within the Engagement Standards.

- 5.4 If the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy is not implemented, there is a lack of evidence on the landlord's commitment to provide meaningful engagement opportunities. This would not support compliance to the Consumer Standards, specifically the transparency, accountability and influence standard.

6.0 Feedback on the Strategy from the Housing Volunteers

- 6.1 The Housing Volunteers and Residents were consulted on and co-created the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy through a series of workshops and focus groups.
- 6.2 The Residents have provided the introduction of the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy, highlighting the importance of the strategy to residents.

7.0 Decision Type/Scope

- 7.1 This is not a key decision. The Executive is invited to note the approach and progress made to improve resident engagement and to provide input and endorsement of the Draft Housing Resident Engagement Strategy. The strategy demonstrates with a clear commitment from the Housing Service, as a landlord, to meet the Regulatory Standards and provide services which are continuously taking on board resident feedback. This will influence culture and ensure that all teams are actively aware and focused on supporting the strategy.
- 7.2 Residents chose the vision for the strategy.
- 7.3 Residents picked out 3 main themes for the objective focus within the strategy based on their concerns, feedback and experiences. These 3 themes include Communications, Accountability and Culture.
- 7.4 The Housing Resident Engagement Strategy proposes that engagement opportunities are increased from the 8 current opportunities available to 15 proposed engagement opportunities.
- 7.5 These opportunities are under 3 categories of engagement, 'Inform', 'Be Heard', 'Be Empowered'.
- 7.6 The strategy sets out 4x overarching actions to achieve the objectives. These are detailed in the strategy.
- 7.7 The Housing Resident Engagement Strategy will evolve with time and further engagement with residents. It will be important that engagement opportunities develop through resident needs and feedback.
- 7.8 The Housing Resident Engagement Strategy impacts the whole Borough, especially residents who have regular contact with the Housing Service including tenants and leaseholders.

8.0 Implications

Legal

8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Resources (including finance)

8.2 Housing Resident Engagement already has a budget in place, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

8.3 The strategy has provided a baseline of housing engagement opportunities which is realistic within the current resources in place for Resident Engagement.

8.4 There are implications that as volunteer numbers increase and self-assessment against the TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) National Engagement Standards 2024 are completed, there may be concerns over current team resources, staffing and workloads raised. This may need to be reviewed to fully meet the Consumer Standards.

Risks and Mitigation

8.5 There is a risk that in not implementing the strategy, the Housing Service will not be able to evidence meaningful engagement opportunities as a landlord. This will risk non-compliance to the Regulatory Standards.

Consultation, Equality Impact Assessments

8.6 The Housing Resident Engagement Strategy includes a specific Equality and Diversity section.

8.7 Where required, resident engagement opportunities or policies/procedures may require an Equality Impact Assessment to be undertaken prior to implementation on a case-by-case basis. This is due to the variety of engagement opportunities being made available.

8.8 As set out above, the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy has been developed with input from residents.

8.9 The Communities and Housing Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed the Strategy at its meeting on 21 January 2025.

Environment and Climate Change

8.10 The Resident Engagement Team is committed to supporting targets set by the Council on carbon reduction.

8.11 The proposed addition of a Housing Neighbourhoods group and improved development of walkabouts will aim to have a positive impact on the local environment.

9.0 Supporting Documents

Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 - Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2025.

Background Documents

9.2 [Charter for Social Housing Residents](#)

9.3 [Regulatory standards for landlords](#)

9.4 [Tenant Satisfaction Measures](#)

9.5 Woking Borough Council [Housing Strategy \(2021 – 2026\)](#)

9.6 [Woking For All Strategy](#)

Report Ends