

Report for: Cabinet – 19 July 2022

Title: Proposals for Resident Engagement and Participation following the Insourcing of Homes for Haringey

Report

Authorised by: David Joyce, Director of Placemaking and Housing

Lead Officer: Hannah Adler, interim Head of Housing Strategy and Policy

Ward(s) affected: All

Report for Key/

Non Key Decision: Key Decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1. On 1 June 2022, housing services previously provided by Homes for Haringey came back in-house to be delivered directly by Haringey Council. The management and maintenance of the council's residential housing stock, as well as tenancy management and leasehold services are now delivered by officers working within the Council.
- 1.2. Homes for Haringey had a number of channels for resident engagement, and had adopted a resident engagement strategy in October 2021. Following the transfer of services from Homes for Haringey to the Council, it is important to set out how the Council's tenants and leaseholders will continue to be engaged and involved in issues and decisions relating to their housing, as well as ensuring that channels of communication between the Council and its tenants and leaseholders are strong.
- 1.3. More broadly, the Council is seeking to reset its relationship with all residents by empowering communities and putting residents at the heart of decision making. The approach to tenant and leaseholder engagement described in this report will be reviewed later this municipal year so that it is consistent with this.
- 1.4. Cabinet is asked to note and approve proposals for interim resident engagement frameworks.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1. I am pleased to introduce this report, which sets out interim proposals to maintain the existing channels for engagement for tenants and leaseholders of the Council. These ensure that our tenants and leaseholders are able to actively participate in the work of the Council, as their landlord, and hold us to account. This administration has an explicit commitment to co-production and to increasing the voice of all residents. Final proposals are being developed to ensure even greater participation and broader and more representative engagement.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended:

- 3.1. To note and approve the interim resident engagement proposals detailed in paragraph 6.13 of the report.
- 3.2. To note that final resident engagement proposals will be brought forward later this municipal year, including proposals for engaging with the Council's tenants and leaseholders.
- 3.3. To note that proposals for further involving residents in the Council's decision making process continue to be developed and that, if any changes are proposed to the Council's Committee structures, they will be developed in consultation with Members prior to being recommended to Standards Committee, and then to Full Council.

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1. It is crucial that social tenants and leaseholders are able to have clear channels of communication with their landlord, to have their voices heard and for social landlords to have clearly set out method to listen to their tenants and leaseholders and respond to their concerns. With the insourcing of housing services, it is important to ensure that the involvement of tenants and leaseholders in the management of their homes is not weakened; and indeed that tenants and leaseholders have both a strong voice and that all participation processes are representative of the broader tenant and leaseholder population.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1. One option was to rethink at this stage the relationship between the Council and its tenants and leaseholders. This was discounted to allow for broader work on the Housing Strategy and the Council's approach to resident participation to be carried out, and to ensure that any change from the current model was considered carefully and with the involvement of tenants, leaseholders and Members.
- 5.2. Another option was to directly involve tenants and leaseholders in the Council's decision making. This was discounted at this stage, and if it is taken forward would be a decision for the Council's Standards Committee to recommend to Full Council.

6. Background

- 6.1. Homes for Haringey was the Council's arm's length management organisation from 2006 to 2022. On 1 June 2022, the general housing services provided by Homes for Haringey were brought in-house to the Council, and services formerly provided by Homes for Haringey are now provided directly by the Council.
- 6.2. Homes for Haringey managed the Council's residential properties, and as part of this ensured that Council tenants and leaseholders were involved in this process.
- 6.3. Tenants and leaseholders had dedicated channels to ensure that they had a voice in Homes for Haringey's decision making structure. There were four dedicated channels.
 - Tenants and leaseholders sat on the board of Homes for Haringey

- Tenants and leaseholders made up the 'Customer Core Group', which was engaged with on the development of Homes for Haringey's policies, strategies and procedures
 - Tenants and leaseholders made up the Complaints Appeals Panel, which considered complaints from tenants and leaseholders
 - Tenants and leaseholders made up the Resident Scrutiny Panel, which was run independently of Homes for Haringey, scrutinised policy and performance and fed back formally
- 6.4. In addition to the above, engagement with tenants and leaseholders take place using a variety of different methods. This includes tenant and leaseholder involvement in a range of business as usual activities, such as meeting with housing officers and feeding back through the complaints process.
- 6.5. Homes for Haringey agreed a customer engagement strategy in October 2021. This set out proposals to improve tenant and leaseholder engagement with housing services, and notes that a final strategy would be brought forward in 2022/2023, following the insourcing.
- 6.6. Terms of Reference for the Customer Core Group, Complaints Advisory Panel and Resident Scrutiny Panel are attached in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. These are the Terms of Reference for these groups when they reported into Homes for Haringey's internal governance structure; if Cabinet approves recommendations to maintain these groups in the interim they will be redrafted to reflect this.
- 6.7. It is proposed to take a two stage approach in arrangements for tenant and leaseholder engagement following the insourcing of Homes for Haringey. The interim proposals are designed to replicate existing practice and structures to ensure that expertise and established groups continue to feed into the work of the Council as residential landlord. The longer term proposals will build on this and incorporate a final strategy into the broader context noted in paragraphs 6.8 and 6.9 below.

The Haringey context

- 6.8. The Council has just embarked on a major workstream to consider its relationship with all residents. There is a corporate commitment to ensure that residents are fully involved in both service design and decision-making.
- 6.9. Cabinet agreed a draft Housing Strategy in March 2022. Consultation on this draft strategy will take place in Autumn 2022. Residents will be asked about how they would like to engage, communicate with and be heard by the Council, with specific questions for tenants and leaseholders with regard to their relationship with the Council as their landlord. The final Housing Strategy will be presented to Cabinet in early 2023.
- 6.10. Final arrangements for resident engagement will need to take account of both of these workstreams and their final outputs.

The Regulatory context

- 6.11. Registered providers of social housing are regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing. In respect of local authority provided social housing, the Regulator co-regulates together with Councillors the applicable "consumer standards". Social

landlords need to demonstrate that residents are able to hold their landlord to account. In addition, the Social Housing White Paper set out broad aspirations around resident involvement in the management of social housing as well as for increasing the oversight that the Social Housing Regulator has in relation to social housing provided by local authority landlords. There are however no requirements on landlord local authorities who directly manage their housing stock to formally include tenants and leaseholders in decision making: what is key is being able to demonstrate that tenants and leaseholders are listened to and that their voice is genuinely heard.

Interim proposals for effective and meaningful resident engagement

- 6.12. Interim proposals to ensure that tenants and leaseholders are feeding into the decisions taken by the Council around its housing stock are needed.
- 6.13. It is therefore proposed that the following steps are taken to ensure that the expertise of the established channels of resident engagement continue:
- 6.13.1. The four Resident Members of the Homes for Haringey board to be invited to join the Customer Core Group.
 - 6.13.2. The Customer Core Group to continue with its current membership, as well as the additional members noted above. The Customer Core Group will be consulted on all policies, strategies and procedures relating to the Council's management of its housing stock. This process will be managed by Council officers, and the activity of the Customer Core Group will be reported to the Director of Placemaking and Housing on a quarterly basis.
 - 6.13.3. The Complaints Appeals Panel to continue to operate, feeding into the work of the Assistant Director of Customer Services. The activity of the Complaints Appeals Panel will be reported to the Assistant Director of Customer Services on a quarterly basis.
 - 6.13.4. The Resident Scrutiny Panel to be renamed the Housing Resident Advisory Panel and continue to be run independently of the Council through a 'mentor' procured by the Council, to ensure the group's independence. The contract for the mentor currently runs to October 2022 and procurement for a new mentor will commence shortly. The Housing Resident Advisory Panel will report to the Director of Placemaking and Housing on a twice yearly basis, and receive a response to any issues or questions raised. These will be published on the Council website. The Housing Scrutiny Panel may in addition wish to request a report from the Housing Resident Advisory Panel.

Continued improvement

- 6.14. Homes for Haringey's resident engagement strategy provided a strong foundation to ensure that the voices of tenants and leaseholders was heard; and this is being taken forward. It is important to also recognise that there were, and continue to be, areas for improvement. There are in particular groups who participate less in engagement activities, both formal and informal. The Council strives to ensure that all sections of the tenant and leaseholder population are represented in engagement channels and are heard from, and the work to improve representation and breadth of participation is a continual effort.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1. The confirmed continued channels for strong tenant and leaseholder engagement contributes to Priority 1 of the Borough Plan, in particular outcome 3 'We will work together to drive up the quality of housing for everyone'.

8. Statutory Officer Comments

Finance

- 8.1. This report is mainly for Cabinet to note the interim resident engagement proposals. This on its own appears not to have any financial implication.
- 8.2. At a later stage, the final resident engagement proposals will be brought to cabinet and the financial implication of procurement of a mentor to run the Housing resident advisory will be assessed.

Legal

- 8.3. The Head of Legal Services has been consulted and notes that the applicable regulatory regime is summarised in the paragraphs below. Provided that the proposals contained in this report comply with the provisions of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (paragraph 8.4), the Council will be acting in accordance with its duties.
- 8.4. The [Regulator of Social Housing website](#) notes that -

The Regulator adopts a co-regulatory approach. This means that Board members (of housing associations and other private registered providers) and councillors (of Local Authorities) are responsible for ensuring that their landlord is meeting the regulatory standards.

The Regulator's standards cover both economic issues (such as governance and financial viability) and consumer issues (such as ensuring homes are decent and safe, that complaints are managed effectively and that tenants are listened to and provided with opportunities to engage).

- 8.5. With respect to local authorities, the Regulator has no power in relation to "economic issues but it does have some enforcement powers in relation to "consumer issues". Its website states -

The Regulator can only regulate reactively on the consumer standards, which means they do not proactively monitor registered providers' compliance with the standards. Instead, the Regulator receives referrals from tenants or from other third parties. The Regulator is only able to use enforcement powers if there is evidence of a breach of the standards and if there is a significant risk of 'serious detriment' to tenants or potential tenants.

The regulator also sets consumer standards. Currently our role is reactive in response to referrals or other information received and to intervene where failure to meet the standards has caused, or could have caused, serious harm to

tenants. These consumer standards apply to all registered providers, including local authorities (note exclusions below).

The 4 consumer standards are:

- [Home Standard](#) – quality of accommodation and repairs and maintenance
- [Tenancy Standard](#) – how properties are allocated/exchanged and terms around tenure
- [Neighbourhood and Community Standard](#) – issues around neighbourhood and communal areas and anti-social behaviour
- [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard](#) – customer service and complaints, tenant rights and involvement.

The consumer standards and the Rent Standard do not apply to all types of housing. Please note the following exclusions:

- *The Rent Standard and the consumer standards do not apply to 100% owned low-cost home ownership*
- *The Rent Standard does not apply to less than 100% owned low-cost home ownership, nor to certain types of housing detailed in the Government standard on rents for social housing.*
- *The Tenancy Standard does not apply to intermediate rent nor to less than 100% owned low-cost home ownership.*

- 8.6. In the context of this report it should be noted that the Council, as a registered provider of social housing, is required to comply with the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard noted above.
- 8.7. In the event that the government introduces changes to the regulatory regime, then the Council may need to undertake a further review so as to ensure that its policies and procedures are compliant.

Procurement

- 8.8. Strategic Procurement note the content of the paper. There are no procurement implications for the recommendations noted in the paper.

Equality

- 8.9. The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not
 - Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.
- 8.10. The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and

sexual orientation. The first part of the duty applies to marriage and civil partnership status only.

- 8.11. The recommendations are for the resident engagement channels that existed at Homes for Haringey to be maintained for an interim following the insourcing of Homes for Haringey; with an ambition to review overall proposals later this municipal year, taking account of both the results of the Council's Housing Strategy Consultation and wider corporate work on the Council's relationship with all residents.
- 8.12. The recommendations will impact on tenants and leaseholders of Haringey Council. The Council holds data on its tenants with significantly less data held on leaseholders. With regard to tenants, we know that older people, people with disabilities or illnesses limiting day to day activity, people who are from BAME backgrounds, women, and people with low household incomes are overrepresented compared to the borough as a whole.
- 8.13. As noted at 6.14 above, the Council continually works to improve its engagement with its tenants and leaseholders, in particular with regard to ensuring that those who are most engaged are representative of the broader tenant and leaseholder population.
- 8.14. While there are no direct implications on any group sharing one or several protected characteristics, the effort to ensure broad and diverse representation will support groups who are less represented in formal communication and engagement channels.

1. Use of appendices

Appendix 1 – Customer Core Group Terms of Reference
Appendix 2 – Complaints Appeal Panel Terms of Reference
Appendix 3 – Resident Scrutiny Terms of Reference

2. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

n/a