

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 41

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Resident Involvement Strategy		
Date of Meeting:	19 October 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Ododo Dafé	Tel: 29-3201
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report concludes the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group's (TCMG) current round of work on the Resident Involvement Strategy and presents the revised and recommended document to the Cabinet Member. The Strategy was endorsed by the HMCC on 26 September 2011.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing approves the Resident Involvement Strategy.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 This report follows on from two previous reports to Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) that were presented on 14 June 2010 and 27 September 2010. These reports outlined the consultation process and the considerable number of responses that had been collected from the consultation process on the Resident Involvement Strategy.
- 3.2 At HMCC, on 27 September last year, the report presented stated that the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group had met on 13 August 2010 to consider the large variety of suggestions for further amendment or additional items for inclusion that had been received from the consultation with tenants and other stakeholders. Having looked at a number of options the TCMG concluded that, while the Resident Involvement Strategy was approved as a broad, strategic framework, further development was needed to ensure that the document remained live and accessible to all who might wish to read it and use it.
- 3.3 It was through this process that the TCMG decided on an approach that would see the creation of four tenant-led working groups, one for each of four established objectives. These groups would be able to consider all comments and be open to exploring some of the points raised, in more detail, if this seemed

appropriate. The consequence would be to ensure that the Resident Involvement Strategy remained under constant review and open to further development in the light of experience and policy development at national and local level.

- 3.4 The TCMG expressed its desire to be free from officer or councillor influence and therefore recommended that the working groups should be “Tenant/Leaseholder Only” with officers attending by invitation. This was accepted by the HMCC.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 As an outcome of the above, the TCMG resolved to base their consideration around objectives suggested by the Tenant Services Authority. These were seen as central and appropriate to the inclusion of customers. The four Objective Groups looked at how to:

- Provide a wide range of opportunities for residents to be involved in developing and commenting on policies and practices affecting their housing and communities. The method of involvement would need to recognise the variety of ways customers might wish to become involved, in addition to attending meetings.
- Develop a framework for agreeing local offers and priorities resulting in a series of pledges covering a range of service areas.
- Involve residents in the development of housing policy and the design and delivery of housing services.
- Involve residents in monitoring and scrutinising our performance in delivering housing services.

- 4.2 Members of each group considered the suggestions and amendments suggested, through the consultation process, and amended the draft document accordingly. A number of meetings took place and each suggestion, obtained during the consultation process, was considered in turn. These were then brought together and presented to the TCMG for approval. At their meeting of 18 April 2011 the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group approved the collected changes to the Resident Involvement Strategy document and agreed that it could be presented, by the TCMG, back to the September HMCC meeting as a consulted and approved document. In addition it was agreed to produce a shorter, summary version of the document to support the full version. A glossary of terms was also added to assist better understanding of the full document.

- 4.3 Group members considered that certain parts of the document spoke to tenants and leaseholders as a whole whilst other parts of the strategy appeared to address only the tenant reps. As a consequence, the wording was altered to make the distinction clear.

- 4.4 The term ‘residents’ rather than ‘tenants and leaseholders’ was kept but the distinction is explained in the glossary. Members wanted to reach out to other members of the community who are not tenants or leaseholders. It was suggested it was essential to emphasise that the work of the Resident

Involvement Strategy took place within a broad and complex web of relationships that included health, safety, education and environmental issues in addition to numerous other relationships that went across housing tenure, age, ethnicity, faith, disability and sexuality, race, sex and gender reassignment. The current Strategy, before HMCC, should not be seen as referencing only issues of tenancy but as representative of residents involved in this broader complex set of community relationships.

- 4.5 The working groups wished to emphasise their desire to retain the current system of Area Panels where local associations could meet to discuss relevant area based issues. There was also a wish to retain the City Assembly as a means of discussing and communicating issues of citywide importance.
- 4.6 It was acknowledged that the governance of the national housing sector was going through a period of change and that considerable uncertainty remained around the future of the Tenant Services Authority. As a consequence a decision was taken to refer to the regulator in generic terms rather than specific.
- 4.7 As a result of the process an additional set of requests were made. These included:
- Contact names and numbers of officers of association committees should be made available to residents on all association notice boards.
 - A continually updated list of all associations should be published in Homing in and on the council website.
 - Minutes of association meetings should be made available on the council website, where individual associations made such available.
 - Younger members of households should be targeted when conducting consultation by questionnaire, by including in the questionnaires specific questions for younger members of households where relevant.
 - More detailed and local information on the improvement works and maintenance programmes should be made available to help with estate development budget bid planning. Ideally this would also include direct involvement in other areas of council spend.
- 4.8 The fourth objective group proposed a residents scrutiny panel and met with the chief executive during the course of their deliberations to discuss options. The need for such an option is included in the strategy as a consequence of that meeting but also in expectation that progress will be made in this area in the near future.
- 4.9 The authors of the Strategy recognise that in a changing and developing service it is essential to keep documents such as this one live and open to further consideration. The TCMG therefore suggest that this, revised, version should also be placed on the council website for continuous comment. This will allow the document to remain live and open to future evolution and development, in recognition of the fast changing world of involvement and influence in service delivery.

- 4.10 The Cabinet Member for Housing has made clear her commitment to building on the excellent work of everyone currently involved in community participation by seeking further opportunities to extend involvement in ways and on matters that residents prefer. This is as part of the new Administrations manifesto commitment to widen engagement. The Cabinet Member for Housing will establish an 'Innovation Group', working with residents to see how we can make an even bigger difference to engagement, and enabling residents to play a part in helping monitor and improve their housing services. Work will also include using technology to widen participation, listening to a range of ideas for how we can remove any current barriers to involvement, and establishing with residents the type of scrutiny arrangements they would like to see in place.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Any costs associated with the completion of the Resident Involvement Strategy have been contained within the 2010/11 and 2011/12 Housing Revenue Account budgets. It is anticipated that any costs arising from the work of the 'Innovation Group' can be contained within current budgets and will be monitored as part of the monthly system of budgetary control (TBM). Any work arising that required significant financial resources would need to be the subject of a further report to this Committee.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Monica Brooks Date: 31/08/11

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 As this is one in a series of reports on the Resident Involvement Strategy, there are no specific legal or Human Rights Act implications to draw to the Cabinet Member's attention.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley Date: 14/09/11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed for this Strategy and is attached as an appendix for the report. The Tenant Compact Monitoring Group remains acutely aware how essential it is that the Resident Involvement Strategy is and remains a beacon for equality and inclusion. In this way there can be an assurance that the strategy genuinely reaches out to involve residents in a way, a manner and at a time and place to suit the individual resident.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 As with all our activities, any area in which we involve residents will invariably focus on issues of sustainability whether that be environmental, economic or social aspects of sustainability. This strategy seeks to place resident involvement on a sustainable footing for at least the next five years, and ensure greater representation of all groups within our tenant profile.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The Resident Involvement Strategy emphasises the importance of communities taking responsibility for all aspects of their environment, not only those concerned with structural aspects of the buildings.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The tenant and leaseholder representatives who were responsible for developing this strategy were mindful of the need to expand and develop residents' involvement and finding new ways of engaging with them as citizens. The risk of failing to do this in the most appropriate way is that the representative voice will be limited and significantly reduced. The opportunity rests in further developing expanded options of involvement and communication that the Resident Involvement Strategy affords.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 There are no significant direct public health implications arising from this report.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The Resident Involvement Strategy maintains Brighton & Hove Council tenants in the vanguard of active involvement in the community. It also demonstrates the commitment of those involved to continue reaching out to those parts of the community not involved in an effort to include them in ways appropriate to their needs. This work also sits in the context of the Council's Community Engagement Framework.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The consultation process outlined at section 4 above, sets out the method by which alternative options were considered which resulted in the resident involvement strategy proposed.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To provide a framework within which innovations in resident involvement can be made, building on the existing Tenant Compact.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Resident Involvement Strategy (revised version following consultation).
2. Equalities Impact Assessment

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None