

Resident Involvement Strategy 2021-2024

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Introduction

Introduction

Cambridge City Council is proud to involve tenants and leaseholders in the delivery and management of the the housing services they receive.

Involved tenant and leaseholder inspectors, panel and committee members, have direct input and scrutiny of key decisions around their housing. The Housing Scrutiny Committee, with tenant and leaseholder representatives having direct input alongside councillors has, since it was constituted in 2014, enabled tenants and leaseholders to have a powerful influence on their housing service.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents (government Social Housing White Paper, 2020), has the commitment (point 5 of the Charter) *"To have your voice heard by your landlord"* and this includes regular meetings and scrutiny panels - it's good to see the government catching up with Cambridge City Council!

The wider tenant community also participates via surveys, tenant newsletter / magazines, social media channels, the online portal, and local residents' groups and associations.

The Resident Involvement Strategy reflects feedback from the 2020 tenant and leaseholder satisfaction survey - such as the wish to be better informed whilst recognising that many tenants do not have access to the internet; and reinforcing that health and wellbeing is a resident priority. So, when we commit to, for example. a new e-newsletter, this has to go hand-in-hand with our digital inclusion strategy enabling more residents to have access to the internet.

With scarcer resources in the housing service, Resident Involvement must provide a targeted service that responds to the needs of tenants, the priorities of the housing service, and satisfies regulatory requirements.

This Resident Involvement Strategy offers a clear outcome-based method of ensuring that Resident Involvement continues to provide an effective, value-for-money service that answers the needs of today's social housing environment.

Councillor Mike Todd-Jones
Executive Councillor for Housing

1. Housing service priorities

Linking Resident Involvement directly to business plan objectives

The priorities outlined in the 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey must link to business plan objectives. In turn, residents must be empowered and enabled to influence the business plans of other services whose actions may also impact upon tenants and leaseholders, promoting an effective circle of engagement.

1.1 Ensure that tenant and leaseholder priorities are recognised when developing involvement projects or improving housing services:

Tenants' top three priorities for housing services*

1. Improve property standards through maintenance and upgrades.
2. Improve communication, ensure residents' views are considered and complaints are followed up.
3. Build more council homes

Leaseholders' top three priorities for housing services*

1. Improve the appearance of external communal areas and grounds maintenance
2. Improve the standard of internal communal cleaning
3. Improve communication, ensure resident's views are considered and complaints are followed up.

*Source- 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

1.2 Link involvement directly to the organisation's management structure. Priorities highlighted through involvement are reflected in business plans, strategies and operational plans for customer facing services. Effective resident involvement is recognised and valued by staff, councillors, and other stakeholders.

1.3 Create a service involvement charter which establishes where and when the residents will be involved with key decisions such as staff recruitment, tender evaluation, and services re-organisation.

1.4 Make sure that involvement is planned, monitored, and reviewed quarterly with HSC Resident Representatives. This approach should reflect the profile of residents, communities, and housing types.

2. Resources

Identifying support for effective Resident Involvement

We will promote an inclusive environment and identify the right support to put in place to enable effective involvement of tenants and leaseholders.

- 2.1** Allocate sufficient resources for Resident Involvement, reviewing annually to ensure it is effective in delivering planned outcomes. Ensure that all activities are targeted to make best use of financial resources.
- 2.2** Introduce new staff to the role of resident involvement in the housing service, training and equipping them with the skills needed to independently administer it within their role. Promote resident involvement as part of housing staff's performance objectives where appropriate.
- 2.3** Provide a clear remit of voluntary roles and the appropriate levels of support for involved tenants and leaseholders so that they can be effective.
- 2.4** Promote opportunities for involvement, through a variety of media channels, including printed media such as Open Door, web, social media, online portal, and events.
- 2.5** Monitor and measure the success of projects and increase the take-up of involvement opportunities.

3.Communication & Insight

Providing information to residents in ways they choose, gathering and using customer insight effectively

To ensure resident involvement is fully maximised, we will provide information to residents in ways they choose from the options available, gather their views, and use them to inform the direction of services. Regularly publishing the corresponding changes and improvements to complete the cycle of engagement.

Tenant and Leaseholder preferred methods of communication*

1. Letters (61%)
2. Email (23%)
3. Phone/text (11%)
4. Face to face (2%)
5. Online (e.g. website, My Cambridge portal) (2%)

3.1 Understand resident's preferred channel of engagement, use this to increase access to information and to allow feedback and information to be shared.

3.2 Feedback from residents indicates that the housing service need to keep residents better informed*. Information outlined in the tenant satisfaction measures, outlined within the Social Housing White Paper will be published annually. A new e-newsletter will also be created and published 3 times a year to increase the frequency of communication.

3.3 Information gathered through involvement is used to gain insight and influence services so that they reflect tenant, leaseholder and community profiles and preferences.

3.4 Evaluate and promote the changes and improvements brought about through Resident Involvement and share them with staff, tenants, and leaseholders. Housing is one of the largest services the council provides so it should be promoted accordingly.

3.5 Develop a digital inclusion strategy which recognises that 26% of tenants do not have access to the internet*. Work with stakeholder service to increase the usability of the online housing (Orchard) Portal.

*Sources - 2020 general needs-tenant/leaseholder satisfaction survey

4. Influence & Scrutiny

Ensuring residents and communities can influence services appropriately

As recommended in the Social Housing White Paper (2020), we will always seek to enable tenant and leaseholder scrutiny and influence at both a strategic and operational level. This ensures that residents have real power in holding the council to account for decisions, performance, and conduct. Residents also hold an accountable role in their landlord's decisions, performance, and conduct.

- 4.1 Allow tenants and leaseholders to have direct influence over housing strategy, policy, standards, approaches and performance targets and promote these involvement opportunities.
- 4.2 Give all council tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to stand as and vote for representatives on the Housing Scrutiny Committee, with elections happening every 4 years.
- 4.3 Ensure that tenants and leaseholders are involved in performance monitoring, learning from performance information, and improving performance through effective challenge.
- 4.4 Provide a framework that allows residents to hold the organisation to account through collaborative yet independent resident-led scrutiny.
- 4.5 Have a robust method for allowing residents to play a role in understanding complaints monitoring. Work collaboratively with the Policy and Performance Unit to suggest changes which respond to areas with high levels of complaints.
- 4.6 Ensure clarity about the role of tenant and leaseholder influence and scrutiny within the organisation amongst councillors, staff, and senior management. Increase transparency and provide more accessible information to increase residents' understanding of council's processes.

5. Neighbourhood Improvement

Promote and facilitate avenues for neighbourhood improvements

Our principles for working with communities rely on understanding their priorities and finding solutions within the community itself for long term sustainability. Our goal is to empower and support communities to develop their capacity and address their issues.

- 5.1 Work with local stakeholders to deliver community engagement projects that are designed to meet jointly identified needs.
- 5.2 Increase resident satisfaction with the overall appearance of their neighbourhood by encouraging input and enabling changes through the Estate Improvement Scheme.
- 5.3 Facilitate involvement for residents in monitoring estate services contracts- this will increase accountability, improve the standard of service, and ensure they represent value for money.
- 5.4 Improve the internal culture within the council to focus on the customer journey and joined up working between council departments.
- 5.5 Develop and gather input from communities to initiate changes which improve the health and wellbeing of residents on their estate which was outlined as a resident priority*.
- 5.6 Explore the possibility of co-producing services with the communities they serve, residents have greater responsibility and involvement in developing their estate and environment.

**Sources - 2020 general needs-tenant/leaseholder satisfaction survey*

6. Value for money

Measuring the effects of Resident Involvement to add value for stakeholders, communities, and individuals

We will always seek to demonstrate the value of Resident Involvement so we can arrive at cost-effective solutions and ensure that communities continue to support our future work. The 2022 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey will be key to measuring the success.

- 6.1** Ensure that involvement is planned, monitored, and measured and has clear aims, objectives, and outcomes. Review it regularly to understand the value created
- 6.2** As recommended in the Social Housing White Paper (2020), report the value and successes of Resident Involvement across the organisation and to all key stakeholders.
- 6.3** Maintain effective scrutiny of housing related contracts. Clear communication and resident involvement lead to improvements in service delivery which presents value for money.
- 6.4** Learn from reviews and share results with tenants, leaseholders, and other stakeholders to improve effectiveness of involvement.

Reporting

With involvement from the 6 elected resident representatives, the Resident Involvement team will produce an end of year report which records the progress made against each of the 6 key objectives. The report will be circulated to the Housing Scrutiny Committee, senior officers as well as published on the website and within established publications.

Outcome Table	
Heading	Outcome at annual review
1. Housing service priorities	
Ensure that tenant and leaseholder priorities are recognised when developing involvement projects or improving housing services	
Link involvement directly to the organisation's management structure. Priorities highlighted through involvement are reflected in business plans, strategies and operational plans for customer facing services. Effective resident involvement is recognised and valued by staff, councillors, and other stakeholders.	
Create a service involvement charter which establishes where and when the residents will be involved with key decisions such as staff recruitment.	

<p>Make sure that involvement is planned, monitored, and reviewed quarterly with residents. Approaches should reflect the profile of residents, communities, and housing types.</p>	
<p>2. Resources</p>	
<p>Allocate sufficient resources for Resident Involvement, reviewing annually to ensure it is effective in delivering planned outcomes. Ensure that all activities are targeted to make best use of financial resources</p>	
<p>Introduce new staff to the role of resident involvement in the housing service, training and equipping them with the skills needed to independently administer it within their role. Promote resident involvement as part of housing staff's performance objectives where appropriate.</p>	
<p>Provide a clear remit of voluntary roles and the appropriate levels of support for involved tenants and leaseholders so that they can be effective</p>	
<p>Promote opportunities for involvement, through a variety of media channels, including print, web, social media, online portal, and events.</p>	
<p>Monitor and measure the success of projects and increase the take-up of involvement opportunities.</p>	
<p>3. Communication and Insight</p>	

Understand residents' preferred channels of engagement, use them to increase access to information and to allow feedback and information to be shared.	
Feedback from residents indicates that the housing service need to keep residents better informed*. Information outlined in the tenant satisfaction measures, outlined within the Social Housing White Paper (2020) will be published annually. A new e-newsletter will also be created and published 3 times a year to increase the frequency of communication.	
Information gathered through involvement is used to gain insight, influence services so that they reflect tenant, leaseholder and community profiles and preferences	
Evaluate and promote the changes and improvements brought about through Resident Involvement and share them with staff, tenants, and leaseholders. Housing is one of the largest services the Council provides so it should be promoted accordingly.	
Develop a digital inclusion strategy which recognises that 26% of tenants do not have access to the internet*. Work with stakeholder service to increase the usability of the online housing (Orchard) Portal.	
4. Influence and Scrutiny	
Allow tenants and leaseholders to have direct influence over housing strategy,	

policy, standards, approaches and performance targets and promote these involvement opportunities.	
Give all council tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to stand as and vote for representatives on the Housing Scrutiny Committee, with elections happening every 4 years.	
Ensure that tenants and leaseholders are involved in performance monitoring, learning from performance information, and improving performance through effective challenge.	
Provide a framework that allows residents to hold the organisation to account through collaborative yet independent resident-led scrutiny.	
Have a robust method for allowing residents to play a role in understanding complaints monitoring. Work collaboratively with the Policy and Performance Unit to suggest changes which respond to areas with high levels of complaints.	
Ensure clarity about the role of tenant and leaseholder influence and scrutiny within the organisation amongst councillors, staff, and senior management. Increase transparency and provide more accessible information to increase resident's understanding of Council's processes.	
5. Neighbourhood Improvements	
Work with local stakeholders to deliver community engagement projects that	

are designed to meet jointly identified needs.	
Increase resident satisfaction with the overall appearance of their neighbourhood by encouraging input and enabling changes through the Estate Improvement Scheme.	
Facilitate involvement for residents in monitoring estate services contracts- this will increase accountability, improve the standard of service, and ensure they represent value for money.	
Improve the internal culture within the council to focus on the customer journey and joined up working between council departments.	
Develop and gather input from communities to initiate changes which improve the health and wellbeing of residents on their estate which was outlined as a resident priority*.	
Explore the possibility of co-producing services with the communities they serve, giving residents greater responsibility and involvement in developing their estate and environment.	
6. Value for money	
Ensure that involvement is planned, monitored, and measured and has clear aims, objectives, and outcomes. Review it regularly to understand the value created	

<p>As recommended in the Social Housing White Paper (2020), report the value and successes of Resident Involvement across the organisation and to all key stakeholders</p>	
<p>Maintain effective scrutiny of housing related contracts. Clear communication and resident involvement lead to improvements in service delivery which presents value for money.</p>	
<p>Learn from reviews and share results with tenants, leaseholders, and other stakeholders to improve effectiveness of involvement.</p>	