

**Lead Officer:** Executive director of adult services and housing

**Wards:** All

**Agenda Item:** 14

**Subject: -** PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHING A COMPETENCY  
FRAMEWORK

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## **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to agree this proposal.
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## **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report summarises a proposal, developed in partnership with residents, particularly the Resident Involvement Group, for a framework for tenants who wish to be involved in the various activities provided by the resident involvement team.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Currently, the various groups and panels that help make some of the more important decisions are largely made up of a committed but small nucleus of residents, whose views and experience are of course valued and important. In order to ensure these groups and other activities are sustainable, it is essential that we attract new residents to participate who more accurately reflect the diversity of the local community.
- 3.2 In addition some of these working groups and other activities have been developed to enable residents to make real contributions to the decision making process and improve services for the whole community. In order to meet their eventual aims, it is therefore important that those who participate are both willing and capable of becoming fully involved in such activities.

#### **4. DETAIL**

- 4.1 As the required degree of commitment, skills, knowledge and understanding increases with some of the new resident involvement activities, it has become apparent that the council should consider using some form of selection process for some of these activities.
- 4.2 The expectation is that using a selection process will reduce the likelihood of residents putting themselves forward for the activity, for which they may not possess the skills or understanding to continue to participate, or that they were unable to commit the time.
- 4.3 Over the last two or three years, a selection process has been used to select residents wishing to take part in the Housing Scrutiny Panel and more recently, the Croydon Adult Social Services User Panel, both of which require a significant degree of commitment and understanding.
- 4.4 Applicants for both these roles were asked to demonstrate their ability to meet various requirements of the role, by completing a simple self assessment form as part of their application and those who demonstrated the relevant requirements in their written application were then shortlisted and invited for an interview.
- 4.5 It has been noted that some residents may be willing and have the potential to take part but do not have the specific experience, skills or knowledge required. It is accepted that training is provided to those who are committed but require further support to enable them to play an active role in such activities.
- 4.6 It is further accepted that any selection process should focus on an applicant's commitment, personal qualities, transferable skills and general levels of competency, rather than on their specific knowledge or detailed understanding of a particular topic.
- 4.7 Residents who were asked their views, were concerned that such a selection process could serve to deter people from applying or expressing an interest in the activity. However, the alternate view was that if an applicant is so easily put off, perhaps that in itself demonstrates that the applicant does not possess the required commitment.
- 4.8 It was also suggested that applicants may not answer all the questions honestly. e.g. they might just tick all the relevant boxes to show they have all the skills etc. required when in fact, they do not. It is acknowledged that the forms can only be used as an indicator and if the applicant has clearly not completed their form honestly, then intervention may be required once the person has begun taking part.
- 4.9 In addition it was suggested that the form should be worded and designed in a way that would encourage an applicant to be more open

in their answers. e.g. it might be made clear that if an applicant noted on the form that they lacked some skills, they would be offered training. A resident may then be more likely to show on the form that they are not fully skilled in that particular area but would be willing to go on training.

- 4.10 It was also agreed that a broad range of activities are offered, with an equally broad range of requirements and a framework would therefore be required which provided a variety of entry criteria and a framework was proposed that works on a sliding scale, as detailed in the following section.

## **5. PROPOSAL**

- 5.1 A sliding scale has been proposed which will include 4 levels, which are referenced numerically for ease of reference
- 5.2 Level 1 will be used for those activities where residents can choose to attend or participate on an informal basis, which would not require long term commitment or any level of competency such as those below. Participants may be asked to complete a HSB form but this would not be compulsory.
- Attending conferences or other events that are open to all
  - Attending Your Housing, Your Questions
  - Taking part in surveys etc
- 5.3 Level 2 will be used for activities such as those below, where we will continue to ask new applicants to commit to membership, perhaps by way of completing a simple membership form, or we may also ask members to register their details on the housing sounding board (although this will not always be compulsory).
- Member of a Housing Services Forum
  - Member of the specialist panels
  - Member of local resident group
  - Becoming a Neighbourhood Voice
  - Taking part in some short term working groups / focus groups
- 5.4 Those meetings shown above do not involve residents in making major decisions and attendees can choose if they wish to participate fully in the discussions. Should the status of any of the panels change, this may be reviewed.
- 5.5 Similarly, Neighbourhood Voices are asked to commit to participate regularly but this can be flexible and participants only assess services delivered to them in their immediate area.
- 5.6 Short term working groups appear here and in level 3 (below). Level 2 will be used where working groups are called quickly, where they are primarily called in order to gauge residents views on a topic but not to

make significant or strategic decisions.

- 5.7 Level 3 will be used where residents are invited to participate in schemes, such as those below, where a degree of detailed work and / or decision making is required, although decisions made will not be critical to the business.
- Taking part in Estate Inspections
  - Becoming a Mystery Shopper
  - Member of Performance Monitoring Panel
  - Member of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel
  - Taking part in some short term working group(s)
- 5.8 Participants would require commitment and a level of competency and understanding. Applicants will be asked to submit a short self assessment form, such as the example attached – Appendix 1. This will be no more than 2 sides of A4 and will be largely tick boxes. As shown, there will be reference to the availability of training if applicants feel this may help.
- 5.9 Applicants will be shortlisted by the resident involvement and scrutiny team. However, forms from those who completed their form correctly but were not selected by the team, would be put before the Resident Involvement Group who would determine if they feel the decision not to consider each applicant is correct.
- 5.10 Estate Inspections have previously been open to anyone who is interested but it is proposed that residents should have a good understanding of both the process and the way the organisation works, as well as a degree of commitment – both in terms of time and being prepared to act on behalf of other residents.
- 5.11 Where working groups are called to consider matters of policy or looking at possible significant changes, officers responsible for that group will decide if a short self assessment is required. Current examples would be the repairs monitoring group or the estate inspection review group.
- 5.12 Level 4 will be used for those panels and activities that might require a significant commitment as well as a significant level of competency and understanding. In addition, decision making will be of a more strategic nature, such as those shown below.
- Member of Housing Scrutiny Panel
  - Member of the Stock Investment Working Group
  - Becoming a Housing Services Inspector
  - Member of the Housing Complaints Panel
- 5.13 This level will entail a candidate / applicant completing a longer and more detailed self assessment form (Appendix 2). As well as being

asked to tick boxes to indicate skills etc., applicants will be asked to provide full written responses to some questions in support their application.

- 5.14 Applicants will be shortlisted by an independent panel, made up of 3 people (a resident, an officer and one other from the voluntary sector) Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to a short interview. The interview will allow the information provided as part of the application form to be verified, through the applicants being asked a range of questions.
- 5.15 In levels 3 and 4 all applicants will be sent a short person specification (Appendix 4) detailing the key skills, aptitudes and experience required, as well as a self assessment form where, as far as possible, the questions will be laid out in a similar order to the statements in the person specification.
- 5.16 The process will be carried out in a way that ensures that those who are interested and have the basic aptitude required for a particular role, are not excluded if they are unable to show they have specific experience or skills. Applicants will also be asked to identify if some training may be beneficial.
- 5.17 Where a change of approach is proposed, such as asking applicants for the Stock Investment Working Group to use the level 4 approach, or the TLP members being subject to level 3 (see Appendix 3), the existing members of those groups will be consulted and agreement made about how to proceed. In some cases it may be felt relevant to allow existing members to remain in post and use the selection process for new applicants only.
- 5.18 The entire process will be linked to an increased level of recruitment, which may be linked in turn to the relaunch of the housing sounding board, as Be Involved. Some opportunities will be promoted as vacancies under the councils recruitment pages and through external networks such as the CVA.
- 5.19 The level that will be applied to each activity currently offered will be discussed and agreed with residents involved in that activity prior to starting the process. The above is intended as guidance and in some instances, it may be felt that the approach used will be adjusted to suit.

## **6. EQUALITIES CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 It is obviously essential that the upper levels of the process do not put residents off applying. Open days or other informal sessions may be used to enable possible applicants to meet current members and officers, to ask questions and get assistance with completing the forms etc., if that is required.

- 6.2 In both level 3 and 4, a covering letter or information sheet will explain clearly how the form should be completed and offer a contact for assistance if it is required.
- 6.3 Where residents are involved in shortlisting or interviewing applicants they will not be permitted to take part in the process where applications are from people who are known to them.
- 6.4 It has previously been noted that the forms will provide an opportunity for applicants to identify if they feel training is required and make it clear that training is available to those who need it.

## **7. FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIIONS**

- 7.1 There will be some additional officer time related to producing information and developing person specifications and other paperwork, as well as shortlisting and interviewing.
- 7.2 However, it is not expected that there should be any significant costs associated with these proposed changes and in the long term these proposals might reduce the time spent training residents if participants remain involved for longer.

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