

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel Supplementary Agenda



7. **Health & Safety Panel** (Pages 3 - 6)
Updated Report.
8. **Future proposals for Open House newsletter** (Pages 7 - 10)
Report attached.

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Croydon Council resident health and safety group

Background

The tragic fire at Grenfell in June 2017 was a national disaster that has thrust tenant involvement and the tenant voice, amongst other issues into sharp focus. The Hackett Review report published in May 2018 and the Green Paper address a further exploration of safety, involvement and complaints and called for the government to improve how it engages with residents and give them a much stronger voice in building safety.

Another key theme that runs across the Green Paper and the proposals is the intention to make building and fire safety information available and accessible to residents. Also involving residents on building safety processes and procedures and making it easy for residents to report concerns on building safety.

The recommendations included:

- Ensuring information on building and fire safety procedures available in accessible ways to residents
- Helping to improve residents understand of building safety
- Easy access to information about fire safety, including Fire Risk Assessments
- A resident engagement strategy which shows residents rights and responsibilities, how information is shared with residents and involving residents in work that may impact on resident safety
- A clear system and process for residents who want to raise concerns about safety in buildings.

Croydon's response

We are creating a new **resident led health and safety advisory panel** to place residents at the very heart of Croydon's commitment to deliver these recommendations and comply with requirements and expectations raised since the Grenfell fire.

While there will be a focus on fire safety, the group will address other aspects of health and safety in buildings, including:

- Fire safety
- Gas safety
- Electrical safety
- Asbestos
- Legionella/water
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), Decent Homes criteria
- Trips and falls
- Lifts

Outcomes/impact

Residents living in council homes and buildings are often the best people to understand the risks in the buildings where they live. Empowering residents, giving them new skills and getting them involved in making decisions creates a culture of trust and demonstrates that the health, safety and wellbeing of our residents is important to us. Other benefits include:

- Greater awareness of risks specific to where residents live
- Better control and identification of risk
- Helps to develop a positive health and safety culture where risks are managed sensibly
- Buildings become safer and healthier
- Less accidents and ill-health
- Talking, listening and cooperating can help to identify joint solutions to problems
- Creates a desire to improve the overall environment in a building

About the group and how it will work

It's critical that membership of the group is representative of a diverse mix of tenants and leaseholders, including those living in high rise buildings, street properties, sheltered blocks and in general needs blocks. The resident involvement team will review membership as the group develops and target specific groups of residents where necessary to ensure a diverse range of participants.

Members will be invited to join a closed group which will be hosted on Facebook to enable residents who are unable to engage face to face or attend meetings to have an equal opportunity to contribute to discussions. A face to face 'launch' event, hosted by the resident involvement team, will be organised as the group starts to take shape. The closed Facebook group will be administrated, managed and moderated by the resident involvement team.

Looking ahead

It is anticipated that smaller task and finish groups will form to focus on specific themes, for instance, safety advice and information for residents living in high-rise blocks. The resident involvement team will facilitate engagement with key stakeholders such as the LFB, councillors and council officers from the repairs, capital delivery, tenancy, safety compliance and other services as required.

As the group evolves over the coming months, and becomes representative of a diverse range of residents, a core steering group or panel will be proposed. This panel will support relevant council officers and ensure that tenant and leaseholder voices are at the heart of the council's approach to buildings safety.

Activity	When	Notes
Awareness raising and promotion	Nov 18-March 19	Publicity in Open House, social media, website and recruitment drive.
Communication / invitation sent to residents who have registered their interest	April 19	Gauge involvement preferences, area of interest
Discussion group evolution with themes emerging	April / May 19	
Question relating to health and safety included in STAR survey	May 19	STAR survey distributed to all Croydon tenants and leaseholders
STAR survey distributed and feedback gathering	June 19	
Emerging themes from resident feedback and group discussion	July/August 19	
Begin to shape themes into specific work streams or task and finish groups and reflect back key themes to residents	July/August 19	
Initiate steering group development and host resident safety group networking meeting.	September 19	Stakeholder engagement as appropriate
Invite residents to and group members to submit applications for steering group. Draft terms of reference developed.	September 19	
Steering group established and 'work plan' development.	October 19	

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The future of Open House

Background

Open House was first published in 1988 with the aim of providing an effective means by which the council can communicate with residents living in its 16,204 homes. In 2016, it became an on-line (electronic) publication with an option for tenants and leaseholders to 'opt in' to receive a printed copy posted to them, creating a saving to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of approximately £50,000 per annum.

Open House is also available to download from the council's website and the resident involvement Facebook page. Copies are also distributed to all Councillors and all Croydon libraries.

The publication helps to promote key initiatives and reinforce key messages e.g recycling & waste disposal, is a mechanism for consulting residents on proposed housing policy or strategy changes and enables the council to meet the regulatory requirement of ensuring that 'information and communication is appropriate to the to the diverse needs of their tenants'.

1. Recommendation

1.1 The Panel is asked to comment on some proposed changes to the future publication of the Open House newsletter for tenants and leaseholders in order to:

- further improve value for money
- increase readership of the publication
- increase number of residents signed up to receive Open House electronically

2. Summary

2.1 Currently, just 1,400 households have opted in to receive Open House. As documented in this paper, the cost of printing, produce and distributing Open House at present is high, given the limited number of households it reaches.

This report proposes that Open House newsletter, currently an A3 8-page publication, is replaced by a shorter A4 4-page version, which is printed in colour, and distributed four times a year to tenants and leaseholders. Tenants would receive Open House with their quarterly rent statements, to achieve a saving on postage.

Over the next 12 months, we would anticipate a gradual transition so that the majority of tenants and leaseholders (including those currently signed up to receive printed copies of Open House) receive the online publication. Regular signposting to support for residents who want to improve their digital skills would continue to be feature within the 4 page scaled down version of the publication.

2.2 Tenants would receive Open House in their quarterly rent statements to achieve a saving on postage.

2.3 Current cost per edition of Open House:

- Design: 8 page A3 colour newsletter: £1,791.51
- Print **700** copies: £1,133.26
- **Total per edition: £2,924.77 per edition**

2.4 Future cost per edition (under new proposal):

- Design; A4 colour, 4 page newsletter using design template. No chargeable costs
- Print **16,500** copies: £1,000.56
- **Total per edition: £1,000.56 per edition.**

3.0 The proposed change

3.1 It is proposed that the A3 8-page printed edition of Open House is replaced by a shorter

A4 4-page version, which is printed and enclosed with rent statements sent to tenants and leaseholders in all 16,204 council tenants and leaseholders four times a year.

3.2 An online version of Open House would be published at the same time on the resident involvement pages on the council's website and emailed directly to residents who have signed up to receive newsletters electronically. This will no longer be just a duplicate of the print copy as it is now but would include multi-media content, video and signpost readers via links to other web pages, including pages on the council's website.

3.3 The printed 4 pages sent to all tenants and leaseholders would contain news about key council initiatives e.g. recycling & waste disposal, strategy changes and any other consultations or news in order to meet the regulatory requirement of ensuring that 'information and communication is appropriate to the to the diverse needs of their tenants'.

3.4 Residents who currently receive printed copies of Open House – currently around 600 - would be invited to sign up to receive the online version with an explanation of the benefits of doing so and what support is available to help them get online.

3.5 The publication will feature its usual combination of articles relating to council news and features designed to target different demographic groups and to encourage more content inspired and produced by residents.

3.6 Over the next 12 months, we would anticipate a gradual transition so that the majority of tenants and leaseholders (including those currently signed up to receive printed copies of Open House) receive the online publication. Regular signposting to support for residents who want to improve their digital skills would continue to be feature within the 4 page scaled down version of the publication.

Rationale for change

- 3.1 Whilst Open House is sent to around 1,400 households (electronically and by post combined) and residents can download the publication from the council's website, more needs to be done to ensure we are engaging directly with all our tenants and leaseholders.
- 3.2 Articles can often be dated due to the time involved in production.
- 3.3 The overall proposals are in line with the council's digital wide strategy to help residents access digital technology.
- 3.4 47% of residents who completed the 2016 STAR survey have internet access.
- 3.5 Tenants, who have access to the internet, use a range of devices to access the internet with smartphones (70%), laptops or PCs (66%) or tablets (37%) being the most popular.

4. Outcomes

- 4.1 More regular and consistent communication with all Croydon tenants and leaseholders
- 4.2 Greater value for money
- 4.3 Open House and the Open House Online newsletter to share branding to help residents easily recognise communication from the council's resident involvement team and news relating to their housing services.
- 4.4 Proposals support the council's digital inclusion strategy to help residents get online.

Digital inclusion

In the 2016 STAR survey, around one in seven Croydon tenants felt that the council could provide help with digital skills, providing access to equipment and a range of other measures (13% to 15%). A digital inclusion strategy is being developed to support these residents.

The transition will be gradual and it's important that residents without online access or whose preference is to receive paper copies of Open House continue to be accommodated.

The purpose of the refresh is not to exclude any residents with whom we currently engage, but to make much widespread engagement possible through reducing production costs.

As is the case now, paper copies of Open House will continue to be provided to Croydon libraries and councillors.

