

TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER PANEL
16 October 2018

Lead Officer: Hazel Simmonds, Director of district centres and regeneration

Wards: All

Agenda Item:

Subject: - Update on the Refresh of Resident Involvement Framework

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to note the progress made on the refresh of the resident involvement framework and comment on the:
- a) Ideas put forward on the review of the Service Improvement Groups
 - b) Establishment of a Health & Safety panel
 - c) Housing Green Paper's proposals in relation to resident involvement

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report summaries the progress made to refresh the resident involvement framework with the aim of increasing the engagement of residents in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods and increasing feedback from residents on their satisfaction and priorities in relation to housing services.
- 2.2 The report also summaries the Housing Green Paper's proposals in relation to resident involvement and welcomes comments.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the July 2018 meeting of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel (TLP) a report was received proposing changes to the operation of the panel and it agreed a wider review of the involvement framework was required to ensure that the council is engaging with residents effectively, increasing the numbers of those involved and making better use of digital technology.

4. Relaunch of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

- 4.1 At the last meeting of this panel in July existing panel members stood down and a recruitment exercise took place during the following months and is ongoing. To date 25 applications to be a panel member have been received. Those who met the membership requirements were invited to an induction session in September. 21 residents are now registered as panel members of which 9 are new members.

- 4.2 The aim is to establish a panel of 'expert' residents to work in partnership with the council to improve housing services. Members of the panel will regularly be offered training and information sessions to continually increase their knowledge and skills to support them in their role.
- 4.3 The resident involvement team will work with the new panel membership to discuss the future operation of the panel. This will include the option of introducing a rotating chair, the venue & structure of meetings and the possibility of taking the meeting to estates across the borough.
- 4.4 It is recognised that not all residents are able to commit to or able to attend regular panel meetings and in such circumstances residents can apply for associate membership. Associate members will be sent agenda papers electronically and are able to comment on these before the meeting. All comments raised by associate members will be considered at the meeting. Associate members will also receive the minutes of meetings electronically. Recruitment of associate members will commence shortly.
- 4.5 Arrangements are being made for future meetings to be web cast so that residents can view meetings on their laptops, tablets or phones. In addition we will explore options to enable residents to interact with the meetings through Skype or other social media.
- 4.6 Forward planning for the year's meetings is now taking place to ensure both panel members and officers receive early notice of all upcoming strategic issues which will be discussed by the panel.
- 4.7 Report forms will now be issued at all meetings to enable panel members to report personal housing issues and not raise them during the meeting. The resident involvement activity report (included on all panel agendas) now includes more detailed information on the issues being discussed at the service improvement groups and other panels. The minutes of these meetings will now include an action plan detailing all agreed actions, responsible officer and completion date.

5. Review of the Service Improvement Groups

- 5.1 Six service Improvement Groups (SIGs) currently exist covering the following service areas:
- Tenancy & Neighbourhood Services
 - Income & Lettings
 - Leaseholder services
 - Resident Involvement
 - Capital Investment
 - Responsive Repairs
- 5.2 The purpose of these groups is to monitor the performance of the service

area and work with service managers to improve services where performance is not meeting expectations or targets. Attendance at these meetings (with the exception of leaseholders) is low and outcomes are minimal (see appendix A). In addition, a number of very committed residents attend TLP and multiple SIGs but this means that more diverse and varied views and opinions are not captured through the current groups.

5.3 Currently these groups are organised by the operational service. This creates a silo'd way of engaging with residents and makes it more difficult to focus on areas of improvement that involve a number of service areas. Whilst some services lend themselves to a regular forum (ie leaseholders), this is less true for others. We have been trialling new approaches through the Capital investment service improvement group including site visits to monitor and report back on the resident experience of major works and task & finish activities focusing on specific improvements – in this case, we are engaging with residents to review and rewrite standard letters that are sent when major works are due to be carried out. The intention is to ensure that information provided is easy to understand and the impact of this will be assessed in terms of resident satisfaction and service demand.

5.4 A meeting was held in September to which all SIG panel members were invited. A number of **ideas** to improve the operation of the SIGs were discussed. These can be summarised as follows:

- The leaseholder SIG to be replaced by a leaseholder led panel to which all leaseholders will be invited to join/attend
- Less meetings and more site visits enabling group members to inspect council services and talk to tenants who are receiving/affected by services face to face
- More benchmarking and possible visits to other social housing landlords to witness best practice
- Develop a virtual performance monitoring group. Reports sent electronically. Questions/comments submitted by group members and responded to by service managers
- Establish a performance monitoring panel reviewing key performance/benchmarking information across the housing service
- Performance & benchmarking data site to be developed on housing area of council's web site (to include all survey reports)
- Merging of Responsive repairs & Capital Investment SIGs
- Merging of Tenancy & Income SIGs
- Income SIG to become a virtual panel
- SIGs to monitor/review performance & benchmarking reports and establish task & finish groups where services require improving.

5.5 The resident involvement team will develop detailed proposals for the future role of these panel and discuss these further with SIG members. In the meantime panel members' comments on the above ideas are welcomed.

6. Involvement Roadshows and Surveys

- 6.1 The resident involvement team organised roadshows across a number of estates during the summer with the main purpose of encouraging involvement. This also included a short survey asking residents how they would prefer to receive information from the housing service and how they want to make their views heard. We also took the opportunity to ask residents what they liked about where they live and what could be improved.
- 6.2 96 residents were called on in their homes or talked to on the street across 4 estates. 43 expressed an interest in getting involved in future events. A summary of their views on communication can be found in appendix B.
- 6.3 The results show that many more residents (58%) are happy to be kept informed electronically and the most popular method for residents to give their views is through surveys of which on-line surveys are the most popular. We will be using this data to help shape the way we communicate with residents in the future.
- 6.4 We will use residents' views of their home and neighbourhood, coupled with data and evidence, to develop further local involvement events and to work with other services to target local concerns or opportunities. The information has also been shared with the tenancy teams so they are able to focus on issues which are most important to residents.
- 6.5 These roadshows proved to be an effective method engaging with residents and it is proposed that a schedule of further roadshows will be delivered during the coming months.
- 6.6 Croydon is also one of four London boroughs participating in research funded by London Councils and being carried out by The Campaign Company to understand the views of residents living in higher rise properties (blocks of flats of 6 storeys or more). Once the final evaluation and report of this research is available it will be shared with TLP and used to inform the way the council engages with residents in higher rise blocks in particular.

7. Increasing Digital Engagement and Resident Feedback to improve services

- 7.1 An audit of how Croydon obtain and use resident feedback to improve housing services took place in August by Acuity, a leading company for customer research in the social housing sector. Their report has recently been received and they will be presenting their findings and recommendations to managers shortly.
- 7.2 The current involvement framework is currently very focused on face to face engagement activities. Based on this report, we will develop an action plan to also explicitly include the use of data and insight the council gathers and

holds to ensure that a wide evidence base of resident viewpoints and data (for example in relation to customer satisfaction, demographics or social need) is considered when making recommendations for improvements or changes to services or evaluating the impact of resident involvement activities.

- 7.3 We will share the draft action plan with residents at the January TLP so that you can comment and contribute your ideas.

8. Development of a Health & Safety Panel

- 8.1 Following the tragic events at Grenfell the Hackitt report made a number of recommendations in relation to resident engagement. These were reported to this panel in April.
- 8.2 One of these was that social landlords should be more transparent about fire safety issues with their residents. In response Croydon is establishing a health & safety panel. We are currently recruiting residents who are interested in joining such a group or just working with officers to agree its membership and remit.

9. Housing Green paper

- 9.1 The social housing green paper published by the Government in August contains a number of proposals for strengthening the way all social housing landlords engage with residents and involve them in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods. These are summarised in another report included on the agenda for this meeting.
- 9.2 A summary of how Croydon is responding to these proposals in relation to resident involvement follows:

9.2.1 Faster resolution of complaints

It is proposed that landlords should look to process complaints faster and a standard formal complaints procedure may be introduced for all social landlords.

- Croydon has a published formal complaints procedure which has two stages. This procedure is currently being reviewed by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and will look at how well it is publicised, response times, the quality of responses and satisfaction with the service. Their report together with its recommendations is due before the end of the year and will be brought to this panel.
- For the past five years Croydon has operated a Tenant Complaints Panel which acts as a 'delegated person' under the Localism Act. This means that if a resident is not satisfied of the outcome of a complaint under stage 2 of the formal complaints procedure they can opt for the Complaints Panel to review

it. This can help resolve the situation locally without the need to refer to the Housing Ombudsman. We can explore ways of using this panel more regularly in a bid to resolve complaints faster.

- The Complaints Panel currently meets quarterly to monitor the performance of complaint handling, the nature of the complaints received and how the council is learning through these complaints.

9.2.2 Building safety

- It is proposed that landlords should be more transparent with residents about health & safety issues. Paragraph 8 of this report summaries our plan to establish a health & safety panel with the aim of reviewing health & safety arrangements in all our properties.

9.2.3 Performance reporting

It is proposed that landlords are assessed against “a number of agreed and meaningful key performance indicators which will be made publically available in a way that enables easy comparison.” The paper goes on to state that these should be focused on areas that are important to residents and gives the examples of:

- “keeping properties in good repair;
 - maintaining the safety of buildings;
 - effective handling of complaints;
 - respectful and helpful engagement with residents; and,
 - responsible neighbourhood management, including tackling anti-social behaviour.”
- Performance reports are currently presented to residents who are members of SIGs and residents representatives receive a presentation of our annual Housemark benchmarking report which comparesd our costs, performance and resident satisfaction with similar landlords.
 - In light of these proposals we will review, together with residents, the way we present information to resident panels and residents generally.
 - The recommendations in Acuity’s report referred to in paragraph 7 will also be considered and their implementation should enhance the way we use performance data and feedback from residents.

9.2.4 Housing regulation

It is proposed that there should be more robust regulation of landlords to ensure that they are meeting the housing regulations. The current regulations in relation to engagement require landlords to ensure that residents are involved in the management of their homes and that there are opportunities for them to scrutinise their housing services.

- Croydon has an excellent track record in resident involvement and scrutiny and is continually working with residents to ensure that their involvement is effective and leads to service improvements which meet residents needs and priorities.

9.2.4 **National tenant voice**

It is proposed that a national tenant voice be established to ensure that tenants across the country have a collective voice.

- Croydon tenants are already represented on the London Tenants Federation and Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) and we would encourage representation on a new national group if invited to do so.

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