



# Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy



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# Introduction

Residents are central to the work of the Housing and Regeneration Department and are best placed to tell us what works well and what could work better.

Resident participation enables the needs, priorities and aspirations of residents to form the basis of service development and help drive improvements. The Council is committed to ensuring that all residents can get involved to the level of their choosing by providing a range of participation opportunities.

Regular reviews of the housing participation structures mean that the Council can be confident that the range of opportunities available remain appropriate and that residents feel empowered to influence decisions about their housing and get involved with their local community. Resident involvement is a key theme of the Government's Social Housing Green Paper (SHGP) which emphasised the importance of engaging with residents and listening to their views.

The SHGP identifies the need for landlords to consult residents on the involvement mechanisms available to them to scrutinise their housing management service. In response, the Council completed a full-scale review of its participation structures, the outcomes of which were key to developing this Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy. This was led by a Residents' Working Group (RWG) in a series of workshops which considered how participation could be enhanced across the board. This Strategy would not have been possible without the input of the RWG, and the Council would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members for their hard work and commitment throughout the process.



The minimum requirements for tenant involvement and empowerment are set out in the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard 2017<sup>1</sup>. This stipulates that social landlords must give tenants a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in matters including housing-related policies and strategic priorities, decision-making about service delivery, scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the management of their homes. Support must be given to tenants to facilitate their participation, including providing timely and relevant performance information and by ensuring that implications of changes to services are clearly explained.

The Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy has been through a comprehensive consultation process to ensure that residents' and other stakeholders' views have been central to its development.

As well as the RWG, views of the wider resident population were sought through an online questionnaire available to the public throughout the period of the review. The draft Strategy will be presented at the Area Housing Panels in Autumn 2019 and will be subject to a six week public consultation, the results of which will inform the final Strategy which will be launched at a Residents' Association Conference in early 2020.

<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards)

# Resident Involvement Service Standard

The Council's service standard in relation to resident involvement builds on those set out by the Regulator of Social Housing which state how Councils should involve their tenants.

The Council also recognises the role leaseholders play in their community and in helping to shape services. As such, the Council's service standard applies to all residents of Council-managed housing, regardless of tenure, and sets out some specific targets for the Council to meet every year. This standard has been reviewed to align with the recommendations of the RWG to ensure they reflect current priorities around resident engagement and are set out below:

- Support the development of accredited Residents' Associations (RA) and seek to increase the number of residents with access to an RA.
- Publish and deliver Homelife to all Council properties four times a year and promote the online version.
- Provide a variety of ways for you to tell us what you think about our services, including formal and informal methods of engagement.
- Hold two focus groups a year, one of which will look at the Annual Report to Residents.
- Publish a sheltered housing news section in each issue of Homelife and hold sheltered RA focus group meetings three times a year.
- Provide two newsletters a year for all those who receive the WATCH Lifeline Service.
- Carry out satisfaction surveys and use responses to monitor and improve service and performance.
- Provide support and funding for recognised Housing Community Champions who work for the benefit of their local community and publicise their work.
- Work closely with residents on estates identified for improvement and regeneration to develop preferred options for the future of their homes and wider neighbourhood, with the aim of increasing housing options for the Borough's residents and workers.



# National Context

## ■ Social Housing Green Paper

In August 2018, the Government released its Social Housing Green Paper<sup>2</sup> (SHGP), which aims to rebalance the relationship between residents and landlords where necessary, tackle stigma associated with social housing and ensure that it can be both a stable base that supports people when they need it as well as enabling social mobility.

The Paper sets out five core themes: -

- Ensuring homes are safe and decent
- Effective resolution of complaints
- Empowering residents and strengthening the regulator
- Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities
- Expanding supply and supporting home ownership

The SHGP has brought a renewed focus on the importance of empowering and listening to social housing residents. Meaningful engagement with residents drives better services and ensures residents are involved in decisions that affect their housing.

The effective resolution of complaints is central to residents being able to take greater ownership of their housing situation. The SHGP argues that residents should have a stronger voice to influence decisions and challenge their landlord to improve performance.

They must also be able to access good complaints processes, as well as swift and effective redress where appropriate. The recent consultation, Strengthening Consumer Redress in the Housing Market<sup>1</sup>, sought views on how to improve current in-house complaints processes, the results of which are due to be published late 2019.

The SHGP aims to build on this by considering how to improve the whole complaints process, from in-house procedures to the involvement of the Housing Ombudsman and Regulator for Social Housing.

Landlords' performance and residents' ability to easily assess performance is crucial to them feeling empowered. The SHGP states that landlords should be assessed against standards that matter to residents with performance data published in a clear, regular and consistent format. To achieve this an agreed set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to be used by all social landlords should be developed. Residents will be central to devising these KPIs.

As set out as a commitment in the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, the Council has reviewed its consultation and participation arrangements in response to the proposals set out in the SHGP to ensure that residents are encouraged to engage in meaningful involvement and that they can be sure their voice is heard. The review is discussed in detail on page 11.

<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-consumer-redress-in-housing](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-consumer-redress-in-housing)

<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-new-deal-for-social-housing](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-new-deal-for-social-housing)

## ■ Regulatory Framework

The regulatory framework governing social housing is made up of regulatory requirements, codes of guidance and regulatory guidance. The regulatory requirements comprise standards including the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard 2017<sup>4</sup>. This states that social housing providers should ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the formation of their landlord's housing-related strategic priorities, decision-making about how services are delivered, performance scrutiny and the management of their homes. Landlords are expected to support their tenants to develop and get involved, including through exercising their Right to Manage, by supporting tenant groups and providing performance information to help tenants effectively scrutinise services.

## ■ Housing Act 1985:

Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 requires local authority landlords to maintain arrangements to inform and consult with secure tenants who are likely to be substantially affected by changes to matters of housing management. The authority is obliged to consider any representations made before making a decision on such a matter. A housing management matter is defined as including the maintenance, improvement or demolition of housing, the provision of services and amenities in connection to such housing and related policies and practices.

## ■ Housing Act 1996

Section 137 of the Housing Act 1996 extends the duty contained in section 105 of the Housing Act 1985, as outlined above, to include introductory tenants.

Full statutory responsibilities in relation to resident consultation are set out in Appendix 1.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/725831/Tenant\\_Involvement\\_and\\_Empowerment\\_Standard.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/725831/Tenant_Involvement_and_Empowerment_Standard.pdf)

# Regional Context

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## ■ London Housing Strategy 2018

The Mayor's London Housing Strategy 2018 emphasises the importance of listening to the views of social housing residents and ensuring these are at the heart of decision-making by social landlords.

Individual residents must have effective recourse for their complaints and broader issues with specific landlords or estates must be dealt with quickly. Residents' views, concerns and interests need a stronger voice at a national level to inform policy-making.

The Strategy also highlights the importance of meaningful consultation with residents, both in relation to existing housing and in the planning and delivery of new housing.

The draft Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration<sup>5</sup> sets out the Mayor's expectations for new estate regeneration schemes.

## ■ Draft London Plan 2018

The revised London Plan 2018<sup>6</sup> includes a policy commitment to driving inclusive growth, delivering strong and inclusive communities. To achieve this, planners and developers must provide access to good quality community spaces, services and amenities and infrastructure that accommodate, encourage and strengthen communities, increasing active participation and social integration, and addressing social isolation. Streets and public spaces must be consistently planned for people to move around and spend time in comfort and safety, creating spaces where everyone is welcome which foster a sense of belonging and where communities can develop and thrive.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018\\_lhs\\_london\\_housing\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018_lhs_london_housing_strategy.pdf)<sup>5</sup> [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/09\\_draftgoodpracticeestateregenerationguidedec16.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/09_draftgoodpracticeestateregenerationguidedec16.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/download-draft-london-plan-0>



# Local Context

## ■ A Housing Offer for Wandsworth People: Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2019 - 2022

The Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2019-2022, A Housing Offer for Wandsworth People, sets out its commitment to continue to work proactively with residents to inform policy and improve services. The Council will support residents to get involved with their local community and facilitate a range of ways residents can participate with the Council to ensure that everyone has the chance to be involved in decisions affecting their housing, either through formal or less formal approaches.

The Strategy set out the Council's commitment to review resident consultation arrangements by working with a RWG by September 2019. The commitment to implement a new IT system by Summer 2019 will also have positive implications for engagement; the new Customer Portal will improve communication with residents by allowing them to report issues, track progress and give feedback on the housing services they receive in a more accessible way.

## ■ Wandsworth Local Plan 2016

The Council's Local Plan comprises several documents, the most important being the Core Strategy. This highlights the importance of continued public consultation with local residents and other stakeholders when devising the development plan for the Borough.

Evidence of the Council's commitment to meaningful consultation in regards to planning is demonstrated throughout the Core Strategy which, for example, outlines consultation arrangements in respect of the Winstanley/York Road and Alton regeneration schemes.

The Local Plan also highlights the importance of factoring in community spaces when making planning decisions; these spaces can be used by a variety of community groups and the Council recognises the central role they play in meeting the health and wellbeing, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community. One of the policy objectives is therefore to resist the loss of social and community facilities and to seek to secure the provision of new such facilities. An updated Local Plan is due to be adopted in 2021.

## ■ Statement of Community Involvement

Statements of Community Involvement (SCI) provide a framework for consultation and community engagement in planning, to offer both transparency in planning communications and a flexible approach to all future consultations within this overall framework. It enables the Planning Service to continue to meaningfully involve local communities and stakeholders.

SCIs are a legal requirement and form part of the evidence to support the productions of a Local Plan. The Council's SCI was refreshed in 2019<sup>7</sup> and seeks to address and expand upon minimum requirements where possible to improve the effectiveness of community involvement in all aspects of Wandsworth's Planning Service. The framework is guided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which emphasises the importance of early, proportional and effective engagement and collaboration with communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators, and statutory consultees in plan preparation.

<sup>7</sup> [https://wandsworth.gov.uk/media/3507/statement\\_of\\_community\\_involvement\\_2019.pdf](https://wandsworth.gov.uk/media/3507/statement_of_community_involvement_2019.pdf)



### ■ Let's Talk

A programme of Let's Talk events was relaunched in October 2018 and since then several ward meetings have been held across the Borough.

These have been well-attended by local residents who have the opportunity to ask councillors and officers from across the Council about any issues of concern. These meetings provide an opportunity for all residents, regardless of whether they participate in formal structures, to provide feedback and help drive service improvement.

# Review of Participation Structures

## Residents' Working Group (RWG)

In 2019, in response to the SHGP, the Council embarked on a full-scale review of its participation structures in partnership with a RWG.

The Council previously established RWGs in 2006, 2009 and 2015, each with a specific remit, to review the Council's participation mechanisms and produce a series of recommendations. 2006 and 2009 RWGs looked at how to enhance consultation and participation structures to improve training, communication and scrutiny arrangements. In 2015, a RWG was convened to consider whether the Guidelines for Accreditation and a Model Constitution governing accredited RAs should be amended to allow for wider participation at RA officer level. Consideration was also given to amending the rules around Associate RAs. Fundamentally, the broad purpose of the RWG was to ensure all residents can be involved at some level, whilst being mindful of the particular financial and legal relationship that tenants and resident leaseholders have with the Council.

The amendments proposed by the RWG were taken forward as recommendations to the Area Housing Panels (AHPs), Borough Residents Forum (BRF) and Housing and Regeneration Overview Scrutiny (HROSC) Committee where they were agreed.

These were a successful and effective way of consulting residents on a range of issues relating to resident participation and the 2019 RWG built upon this experience.

The purpose of the RWG was to:

- Consider all aspects of the Council's resident participation structures to ensure they function well and meet the needs of residents, including:
  - Overall participation structure
  - Constitutions and formal structures
  - Informal participation routes and how to encourage participation
  - Performance reporting and communications
- Consider how the Council can address matters raised in the Government's SHGP.
- Consider how the Council can enhance the opportunities for resident participation at different levels, including looking at examples of best practice in the social housing sector.
- Encourage as many residents living in council managed properties as possible to get involved in matters affecting their housing.

## ■ Membership

The RWG consisted of:

- Two representatives nominated from each of the four AHPs (one tenant and one leaseholder). This ensured that the RWG had equal representation from across the Borough and was representative of the Council's housing stock which is approximately 50% tenanted and 50% leasehold.
- One resident representative nominated from the Co-op Forum.
- Co-vice-chairs of the BRF, who alternated chairing the RWG workshops.

To ensure wider participation, participants were not current members of the BRF, with the exception of the co-vice-chairs who represented the BRF at the RWG. Reports on the work of the RWG and the Strategy were presented to the BRF in June and September 2019. A summary of each workshop was also circulated to RWG members after each meeting, before being published on a dedicated webpage.

## ■ Workshops

The RWG took part in a series of five workshops between March and August 2019 to consider all aspects of the resident participation structures and relevant constitutions, as follows:

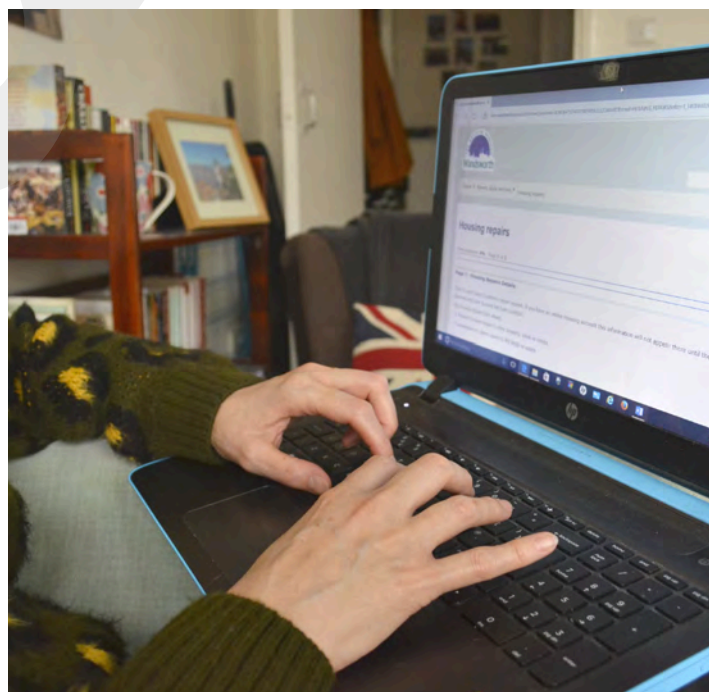
- **Workshop One:** Overview of current participation in the Borough, SHGP and the RWG process. This was an opportunity for the RWG to comment on the proposed topics and ensure everything that needed to be covered was included.

- **Workshop Two:** Formal participation structures (including RAs, AHP, BRF), major works consultation, involving residents in procurement of contracts and training opportunities for RAs.
- **Workshop Three:** Exploring informal routes of participation, housing community champions, estate walkabouts, best practice in the sector.
- **Workshop Four:** Resident Online Portal, performance reporting and satisfaction surveys.
- **Workshop Five:** Proactively using complaints data, the draft Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy and Action Plan.

The recommendations from each workshop have been used to inform this Strategy and the Action Plan sets out how the Council will take the work arising forward.

## ■ Online Consultation

In addition to the RWG, the Council also sought the views of the wider resident population through an online questionnaire which was available to the public throughout the period of the review. The questionnaire was publicised through Homelife newsletter, Brightside magazine and the Council's social media channels. The Council received 100 responses and information received as part of this online consultation has helped inform the review of participation structures and this strategy.



# Communications

Communicating with residents is key to resident participation and is a thread throughout this Strategy as reflected in the arising actions. The Department communicates with its residents in a variety of different ways, including through corporate, Council-wide channels (such as Brightside the Council's newsletter, social media campaigns and the website).

## ■ Webpages

Whilst the Corporate Web Team manage the overall design of the Council's webpages, the Housing and Regeneration Department are responsible for housing specific content. The Department undertakes reviews of webpages at regular intervals and in line with changes in regulations or legislation. Whilst the Council is generally moving towards a digital-first approach and moving content onto the webpage, there are certain publications that are still required in print form - for example Tenancy Conditions and Homesafe booklet for new tenants.

## ■ Homelife

The Council publishes Homelife, its housing newsletter, four times a year which is delivered to all Council managed properties in the Borough and is the main channel through which the Department communicates with its residents. It publicises the work of the Council and ensures residents are informed about the Council's strategic direction, priorities and policies. Homelife is also used to keep residents up to date with issues affecting their housing, for example council led development on estates, major works and SIBs projects. Each issue includes pages on 'Community News' which promotes the work of RAs, HCCs and activities in the wider community, with a dedicated section for news from the Council's sheltered schemes. Residents are able to submit news stories for these pages to show the positive community work that is happening in their area. This may include street parties, day trips, inclusion projects and community gardens.

The Council is committed to continuing to produce Homelife as both a hard copy delivered to residents and an online version on the Council's website.

In the Autumn issue of Homelife, the Council publishes its Annual Report to Residents. The report is split into five sections, which are based on the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing: Tenancy; Home; Neighbourhood and Community; Tenant Involvement; and Value for Money. The annual report is the most far reaching performance report, containing information on a range of housing matters and providing an overview of the year's performance and is produced in partnership with a residents' focus group. Performance measures in the report generally stay the same year on year to allow easy comparison, but these are updated as priorities change, and new areas of work arise. The report provides benchmarking to the year before (in brackets) and uses a traffic light rating to show where the Council is meeting its standards or needs to make improvements. The report also sets out what the key priorities will be for the following year. These are informed by on-going conversations with the formal resident participation structures, trends identified through Housing Link satisfaction surveys and strategic priorities.

The Council is committed to ensuring it utilises its communication channels effectively to inform residents about matters affecting their housing and to empower involvement. The actions throughout this Strategy set out how the Council will do this.

# Role of the Resident Participation Officers

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As part of the Council's commitment to encouraging participation, there is a designated Resident Participation Officer (RPO) in each of the four area housing teams (Central, Eastern, Western, Southern).

Their role is to help and encourage residents to get involved with the Housing and Regeneration Department. They provide support and advice about all resident participation matters and help to build a close relationship between local residents and the Department.

Their work includes:

- Providing information and advice on all participation and consultation opportunities
- Helping to set up and maintain RAs
- Delivering training courses
- Advising on funding opportunities and assisting with small improvement budget (SIB) applications
- Supporting community activities
- Liaising with and monitoring resident management organisations (RMOs)

## Overall participation structures

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The Council has well established resident participation structures that were first approved by committee in 1999 and were reviewed with the help of residents in 2006, 2009 and 2015.

The structure sets out the Council's formal and informal routes of participation, and how these feed into one another. During the 2019 review, it was concluded that whilst the formal routes are robust and well established, the informal routes needed enhancing. Therefore, the most significant change to the structure following the review in 2019 will be to increase the informal routes available.

The Council's participation structure aims to:

- Provide a role for everybody, with a focus on putting residents at the heart of the structure.
- Allow residents to get involved at the level of their choosing by offering a range of engagement opportunities.
- Encourage residents to get involved and maintain involvement.

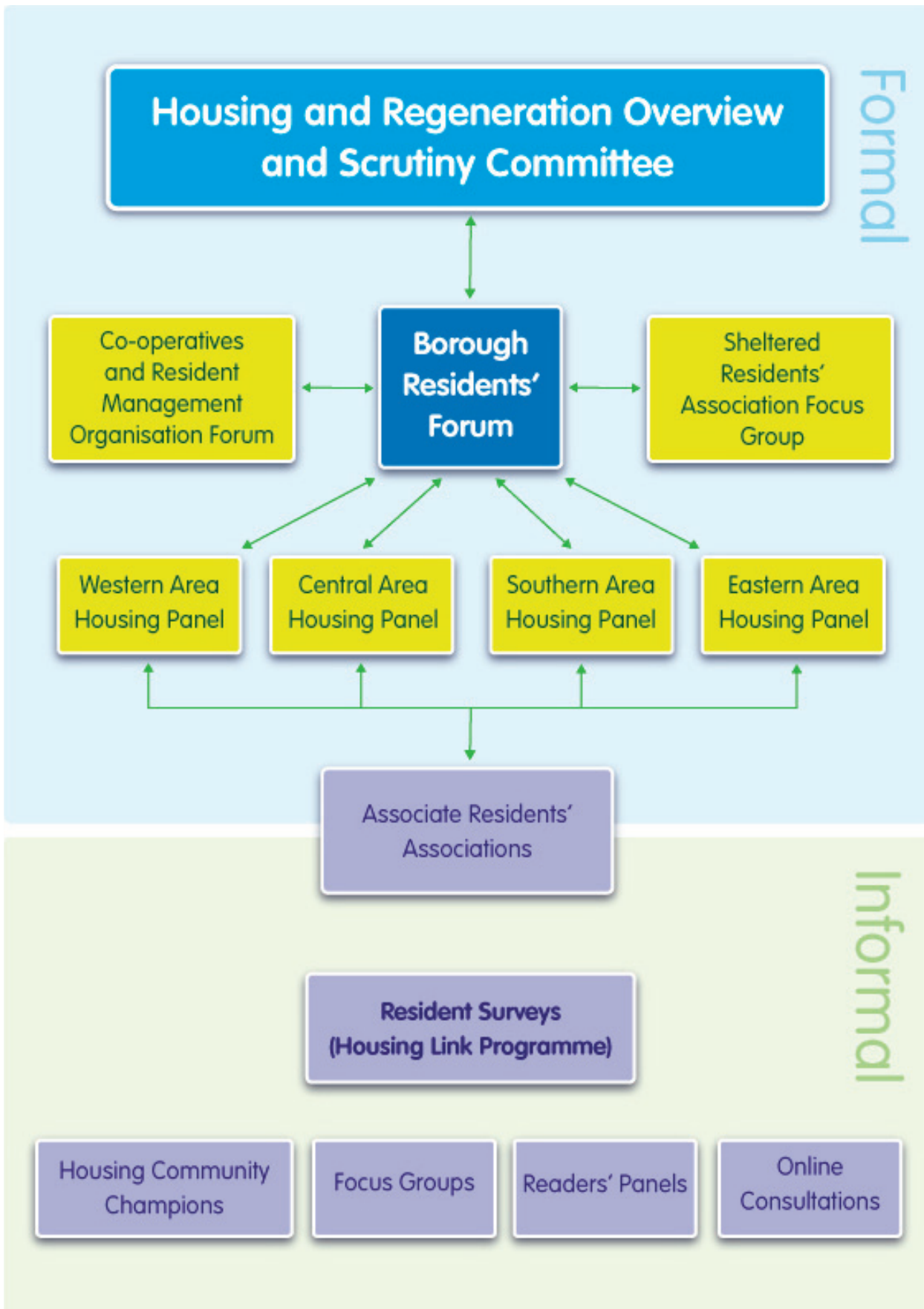


Figure 1: Council's participation structure

# Formal Participation

This is how the Council formally consults with its residents and is a key element of the Council's participation structure.

Formal participation enables residents to scrutinise decisions affecting their housing and the Department's performance.

The Department monitors its performance in key areas and reports this to residents through the formal structures. Each element of the formal structures has a specific remit which allows for matters to be addressed at the relevant level and these feed into one another to ensure communication and feedback throughout.

## ■ Residents' Associations

Residents' Associations (RAs) are the first level of the Council's formal structures. An RA can be formed in any Council managed block or estate where there is an appetite from residents and are open to all residents aged 16 or over in the block/estate.

RAs are a way for residents to formally work with the Council to resolve local issues, make decisions about the management of their block or estate and influence housing services provided. RAs must meet formal standards to ensure that they are fair, transparent and representative of their area which are measured through an annual accreditation process. These standards include: holding an annual general meeting, meeting appropriate membership quotas and following a code of conduct and approved constitution. RAs are expected to follow the Council's model constitution which sets out the aims and objectives of the association and how it will be run. Rules on membership, the committee and finance must not vary from those included in the model constitution.

RAs who do not meet the criteria may be given associate status for an intermediate period of nine months while they grow and acquire relevant skills with the support of the RPO. In 2018/19, there were 54 Accredited RAs, with a further 5 being given associate status while RPOs work with them.

Accredited RAs benefit from an annual grant towards running costs and may invite two representatives to sit on the AHP.

RAs must elect a committee who are responsible for running the association and must include a chair, treasurer and secretary. RAs hold regular meetings which are an opportunity to discuss matters relating to their block or estate and relevant Council officers will attend as appropriate (e.g. Estate Manager or RPO).

## ■ Area Housing Panel

Above RAs on the formal structures are the four AHPs, Southern, Central, Western and Eastern, which meet quarterly. The AHPs comprise two representatives from each accredited RA in the area and are chaired by a Council member.

As set out in the AHP constitution, the AHPs allow for formal consultation with residents on housing related papers and policies where there is an effect at local level and provide an opportunity for liaising with BRF on relevant papers. The AHP agenda is set by the Council and RAs are invited to submit agenda items in advance of each meeting. The AHPs are responsible for the allocation of the SIBs funding for improvement schemes on estates. See page eleven for further information on SIBs.

The AHPs receive quarterly and annual reports on performance which analyse the performance of the housing management service (including the four area housing teams, support services and estate services) and their contractors. These reports cover topics such as repairs, void turnaround times, tackling anti-social behaviour and budgetary performance. They are an opportunity for residents to scrutinise local performance and are available on the Council's Website.





### ■ Sheltered Residents' Association Focus Group

All sheltered schemes with an accredited RA are invited to attend the Borough-wide Sheltered RA Focus Group which meets three times a year to discuss matters relating to sheltered schemes and communicate with officers from the Council's sheltered housing service. Representatives of Sheltered RAs may also sit on their respective AHP, but the Sheltered RA Focus Group provides an additional, specific route of involvement for sheltered residents.

### ■ Borough Residents' Forum

The BRF is the Council's most senior residents' body and allows the Council to meet its statutory duty to consult with tenants on matters of housing

management<sup>10</sup>. The BRF meets prior to each HROSC to allow residents to scrutinise relevant issues of policy and performance (i.e. those affecting Council managed housing). As the most formal route of resident consultation, the agenda is set by the Council and has a Borough-wide, strategic focus. Papers affecting a specific area would involve a more tailored approach, for example estate regeneration and council-led development proposals undergo extensive consultation arrangements with council residents living in the area and other local stakeholders. The BRF receive annual information on Departmental Performance from the Key Issue Updates and Key Performance Indicators which are the highest level of performance monitoring in the Department and are available on the Council's website.

<sup>10</sup> Section 105, Housing Act 1985

The BRF comprises resident members elected annually from their respective bodies, as follows:

- Four members and one deputy from each AHP (Central, Southern, Western and Eastern.)
- Two members from the Co-op Forum
- One member and one deputy from the Sheltered Residents' Association Focus Group.

Each year, the BRF elect a resident member to hold the position of Vice-Chair who attends HROSC to report on residents' views and feedback, and may also represent the BRF at other meetings as appropriate.

The Council will set up an annual poll to allow BRF members to consider a set of topics to be discussed at BRF. These could include a performance report, presentation and/or a service review as appropriate. The set of topics will be decided by the Council based on emerging trends from satisfaction surveys, complaints data and strategic priorities. As the highest formal structure, BRF members represent the views of their electing body (i.e. Area Housing Panels, Co-op Forum or Sheltered RA Focus Group).

### ■ Co-operatives / Resident Management Organisations

Council tenants and leaseholders have the legal right to take over the management of their homes by forming a Resident Management Organisations (RMOs), also called Co-operatives. RMOs can take over responsibility of services including repairs, maintenance, cleaning, dealing with anti-social behaviour and rent collection. To exercise this right, residents must set up a Residents' Group with membership of at least 20% of the block/estate. They must follow a set procedure showing that they can manage services properly, including a 15 month development period and an independent assessment. They must also prove that they have the support of the majority of residents through a ballot and through continuation ballots every 5 or 7 years thereafter.



The Council currently has 12 RMOs and they are subject to ongoing monitoring through quarterly and annual performance reports as well as independent audits. The Council works closely with RMOs to resolve risks that arise from monitoring and where necessary services may come back to Council management.

Representatives from each RMO in the Borough are invited to attend the quarterly Co-op Forum to monitor performance and discuss issues relating specifically to RMOs. Up to four nominated representatives from each RMO may attend the Forum (reps can be either officers or committee members). The Co-op Forum is responsible for allocating SIBs funding to RMOs and liaising with the BRF on relevant committee papers.

The Co-op Forum receives quarterly and annual performance reports to compare the performance of the individual RMOs and the Council's housing management service. These reports cover matters such as repairs, void turnaround time, anti-social behaviour, complaints and rent collection.

### ■ Small Improvements Budget

The SIB is a grant that residents can apply for to make improvements to their estate or block which will benefit the community. These are considered and approved at the AHPs and Co-op Forum. SIB bids can include projects such as: community gardens or landscaping, railings, bike stores, bin enclosures or tables and benches for clubrooms/gardens.

To qualify for funding the improvement project must:

- Not exceed £20,000
- Be non-rechargeable to leaseholders
- Not incur any significant ongoing maintenance costs
- Not be part of an existing programme of works (e.g. door entry systems) or ordinarily be met from other budgets.

Areas covered by an accredited RA or managed by an RMO are given priority for SIBs funding. The budget is 'ring-fenced' for RAs and RMOs for the first 6-months of the financial year. Thereafter, residents from any block/estate may apply for funding.

### ■ RA Conference and Training Opportunities

Following the RWG, it was identified that training opportunities should be provided for RAs. The Council will offer a programme of training opportunities for accredited RAs. RPOs will deliver classroom-based training sessions on a range of topics, including: committee skills, RA grants and bids and organising community events. The Council will also consider ways to provide e-learning where this is more appropriate, for example safeguarding, data protection and fraud awareness.

The Council will organise an RA conference in 2020 to coincide with the launch of this Strategy. The conference will be an opportunity for networking, training and workshops. It will also be an opportunity for the Council to seek resident views on particular topics and invite guest speakers. A set number of representatives from each RA in the Borough will be invited.

## We will:

- Continue to support existing RAs and encourage the formation of new ones through the work of the RPOs.
- Continue the promotion and use of SIBs funding.
- Monitor and support the Borough's RMOs to ensure they continue to provide an effective housing management service to their residents.
- Set up an annual poll to allow members of the BRF to vote on a topic to be considered by the BRF during the year. .
- Implement changes following RWG to constitutions and membership of formal structures, providing additional support to affected RAs to meet accreditation criteria for 2020/21.
- Establish a programme of training for accredited RAs, including considering options for e-learning.
- Organise an RA conference in 2020 to launch this Strategy.
- Update performance reports in line with recommendations from the RWG to ensure these are clear and informative.

# Informal Participation

As well as its formal participation structures, the Council acknowledges the need for more informal, ad hoc ways to participate to ensure residents can engage at a level of their choosing.

The intention is that residents can decide how and to what degree they get involved and for many this will be in the form of one-off events. These are important in reaching a wide number of residents, seeking the views of those who do not want to be involved on a long-term basis and thus getting a rounded picture of how services are being delivered. The opportunities available to residents were developed through the RWG and are set out below.

## ■ Focus Groups

These are one-off groups focusing on individual topics such as housing publications, the website and specific housing services. Residents who have registered their interest in being involved in such groups are invited to attend, and participant numbers are generally between 10-20 residents, facilitated by 1-2 Council officers. The focus group has a clear, limited remit and meets for a one-off evening workshop focused on a specific topic, for example webpages or a new policy. The group makes recommendations in this specific area of work which may be taken through the formal participation structures, e.g. the BRF, as appropriate. The Council is committed to utilising focus groups as residents can provide insight into how the Department is delivering services and they are an opportunity for residents not involved in the formal structures to help shape decisions.

## ■ Readers' Panels

Readers' panels provide feedback on housing documents and webpages before they are published widely. Like focus groups, participants can be recruited from outside the formal participation structures in order to reach a wider resident group. Participants review documents and webpages individually and complete a questionnaire with their views. The focus is on ensuring publications are easy to understand, engaging and useful. Residents are provided with feedback from the Council regarding how their input helped shape the final version.

## ■ Housing Community Champions

The Housing Community Champion (HCC) scheme is a way of recognising the valuable work of residents in their neighbourhood. The Council wants to ensure that those residents who demonstrate commitment to improving their local area are appreciated and encouraged to continue to do so, including those who live in an area that is not covered by an RA. HCCs have access to a specific pot of money which can be used to support them to continue their work. As part of the Council's participation structure, HCCs are also invited to attend AHP as observers. HCCs are involved in a range of community activities and volunteering including: community gardening; involvement in local community groups; organising community events such as children's cookery classes, parties, community roast dinners; fundraising for community projects; estate improvements. The Council will ensure the HCC scheme is well publicised through articles in Homelife, such as case studies of current and new HCCs.



## ■ Participation Registers

The Council is committed to establishing a 'Get Involved Register' which will allow residents to sign up and choose topics they are interested in being consulted on.

This will create a pool of residents who are able to get involved outside of formal structures and at the level of their choosing. Residents will be notified of participation opportunities and Council consultations relating to topics they are interested in. The register will also allow the Council to seek resident feedback on services and consultations as well as providing a route to update residents based on their interests.

The Council is also committed to continuing to explore new routes of informal participation and other ways residents can get involved with the Housing and Regeneration Department. For example, the Council will consider the feasibility of a mystery shopping model where residents spot-check conditions on estates to help monitor cleaning and maintenance standards.



## We will:

- Carry out two focus groups per year with one designated for the review of the Annual Report. Other topics covered will include webpages, major works consultation mechanisms and RA accreditation procedures.
- Set up new readers' panels as appropriate to review publications, including the housing webpages and the RA handbook.
- Review the HCC scheme, including how it can be better publicised and a review of funding arrangements to ensure the scheme remains sustainable as it grows.
- Set up a participation register and encourage residents to join.
- Consider the feasibility of mystery shopping exercises for residents to spot-check estate conditions.

# Engaging the Wider Community

The Council is committed to ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to get involved should they wish and engaging the wider resident population.

Being able to consider the views of a wide range of residents is important in shaping services that meet a full range of needs. Encouraging participation, particularly amongst harder to reach residents, is therefore central to the Council's aims around resident involvement and barriers to this must be overcome. One such way is by ensuring that involvement activities are appealing to residents. The Department will therefore continue to ensure that participation activities are convenient, rewarding and, where appropriate, social as these factors have been found to be key in appealing to residents.

## ■ Housing Link Surveys

The Housing Link satisfaction survey programme is an important consultation mechanism which enables the Department to gather the views of large groups of residents on how well they think services are being delivered and where improvements might be made. The Council's survey contractor conducts two-three surveys a year with a representative panel of around 1,500 residents, including tenants and resident leaseholders, seeking views on the overall housing management service and more specific topics such as repairs and anti-social behaviour. Results are published on the Council's website and are used to inform service delivery design, make improvements as necessary and consolidate effective practice.

As part of the response to the SHGP, the Council is taking the opportunity to review the Housing Link programme to consider whether a fresh approach coupled with improved use of technology and data analysis could aid survey completion and the presentation of results.

As a sector, social housing landlords are moving to conducting more transactional surveys, asking residents in real-time about specific services just received rather than large scale surveys a few times a year. Transactional surveys can provide more representative results as they are timely and focused on a specific service received. The Council therefore is committed to exploring how this approach may complement its existing overall services and seeking a move towards transactional surveys for key service areas.

## ■ Community Gardens

The Council is committed to encouraging and supporting residents to set up community gardens on their estate. Community gardens are particularly effective in engaging harder to reach residents who may not be interested in formal routes of participation but who are keen to get involved with activities on their estate. Gardens allow residents to come together in an informal setting whilst engaging with the Council and making improvements to their estate. The Council's RPOs will work closely with residents who identify space on their estate for a community garden to ensure there is support from residents, to help design the layout, liaise with the horticultural team and apply for funding (through SIBs).



### ■ Chelsea Kicks

The Council works in partnership with Chelsea Football Club who deliver football sessions for children and young people on Council estates across the Borough. Chelsea Kicks is part of the nationwide Kicks scheme which gives children and young people access to professional club coaches to help learn new football skills and improve their fitness. It creates an environment where they can develop positive behaviours such as team building through sports and involvement in their community. The Kicks programme has also delivered workshops on health and wellbeing, self-defence and careers planning.

The Council has also worked with Chelsea Football Club to extend the Chelsea Kicks programme to older residents living in sheltered accommodation in the Borough. Regular fitness sessions are held at the Lennox sheltered scheme and the Council is working to roll this out to other schemes.





## ■ Inclusion activities for older residents

The Council provides a range of inclusion activities for older residents, including those who live in our sheltered schemes. Each sheltered housing scheme in the Borough has a dedicated sheltered housing officer who is responsible for the management of the scheme and offers support to residents. Sheltered schemes host regular activities, including exercise classes, bingo and film nights and organise day trips, including visits to the coast, theatre trips and shopping trips. These are open to all older residents in the Borough, with priority given to residents of Council's sheltered schemes. Activities are publicised through Homelife and the WATCH newsletter.

The Council's Supported Housing Services Team have two community development co-ordinators who are responsible for organising social inclusion events for older council residents, such as a book club and choir. A key focus of their role is to engage with harder to reach groups and ensure all older residents have the opportunity and are supported to get involved in their local community. For example, the Council's 'Men in Sheds' programme which aims to prevent social isolation by giving men and women over 50 years old an opportunity to work on a range of projects including woodwork and crafts whilst meeting likeminded people.

## ■ Rewarding and Promoting Participation

Rewarding participation helps residents feel appreciated for the time and effort their input involves. The Council will continue to appropriately reward residents; this is usually in the form of a shopping voucher.

Effective promotion of participation opportunities is key to ensuring wide participation. The Council is committed to utilising its communication channels, including print publications (Homelife, Brightside), digital methods (webpages and social media) as well as face-to-face and telephone contact to promote participation opportunities and feedback from resident involvement. A review of how effectively participation opportunities are promoted will enable the Department to identify any areas where enhanced promotion could lead to increased involvement. This may be through more regular features in Homelife, for example advertising upcoming RA events, and greater use of social media to highlight opportunities to get involved in consultations and one-off events. The Council will consider the needs of those who are not online when publicising participation and consultation opportunities, for example the Council will ensure these are promoted through Homelife as well as online.





### ■ Involvement in Local Community Events

As well as encouraging RAs to host events and providing support for this through the RPOs, the Department considers how and when it can get involved in local community events, in particular those taking place on its estates (such as the Falcon Road Festival and events with Providence House Youth Group ). Such events provide residents with the opportunity to meet Council officers face-to-face, provide feedback and find out more about services in an informal setting.

### ■ Regeneration Festivals

The Department's Regeneration Team organise an annual 'Get Active' festival in both Battersea and Roehampton in partnership with Enable Leisure and Culture, the Council's development partners and local organisations. The festivals are held on estates and are a successful method of engaging the wider community. The festivals consist of a range of activities, including sports, arts and crafts, as well as opportunities to find out more and engage in the regeneration process. Council officers and development partners are on hand to discuss regeneration plans with residents and there are interactive consultation activities, such as large exhibition boards and models of the development proposals.

## ■ Partnership working

The Department works in partnership with a range of voluntary organisations and local agencies to encourage events in the community and on its estates, from arts festivals to sports sessions. The Council is committed to ensuring that residents living in its Council properties benefit from the wide range of activities and cultural programmes taking place across Wandsworth. The Department helps facilitate events on estates, for example by offering space for them to take place on housing land and provide support publicising events to its residents. The Council is committed to continuing this successful joint working.

Some recent examples of the Department's partnership working are set out below:

- The Department facilitated Wandsworth Arts Fringe to bring the Errant Stage Poetry Tour to the Brocklebank in Earlsfield, Doddington and Rollo Estate in Battersea. The events provided local residents with free poetry and spoken word performances.
- As part of the Wandsworth Arts Fringe, the annual Hazelfest event is held on the Hazelhurst Estate in Tooting which brings music, performance, arts and crafts to the community. The festival is run by the Work and Play Scrapstore, a charitable organisation based on the estate which aims to reduce waste by reusing around 45 tonnes of waste each year through community projects, volunteering and arts.
- The RPO worked with residents at Edgecombe Hall Estate to create a new community orchard on their estate in partnership with The Orchard Project, an organisation who help communities develop orchards to produce their own fruit. In 2018, volunteers of all ages including estate residents and members of the local Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Group came together to plant the trees.



- The Department has supported the provision of free boxing sessions for young people on the Henry Prince Estate in partnership with Enable Leisure and Culture and Carney's Community, a local organisation with experience in delivering social inclusion programmes. The Department provides the use of a multi-use games area and community clubroom to ensure the sessions benefit those in the local community.
- Estates in the Borough have partnered with GoodGym, an organisation who combine getting fit with community projects. GoodGym volunteers have visited the Wendlesworth Estate and Kambala Estate to help residents clear gardens and plant trees.
- The Doddington and Rollo Roof Garden is a thriving community garden on the Doddington and Rollo Estate which was set up with support from the RPO.

The space is used to deliver a host of community events, including a summer programme of activities for children. In 2017, the Doddington and Rollo Roof Garden partnered with local charities Thrive and Paul's Cancer Support Centre to provide a 10-week therapeutic gardening course to local cancer patients and their carers.

- The Department has worked with the London Sustainability Exchange who provided a series of events and plants for community gardens on estates across the Borough with a focus on planting pollinators which would attract bees and other pollinating wildlife to the area.
- The Department secured a donation of plants from the Wimbledon Foundation, the charity of the All England Lawn Tennis Club, for its community gardening groups.

## We will:

- Continue to encourage participation, particularly amongst harder to reach resident groups who do not wish to be involved in the formal participation structures.
- Review the Housing Link programme with a focus on moving towards transactional surveys.
- Work with Chelsea Football Club and where appropriate colleagues in Children's Services to continue and expand programmes for both young people and older residents.
- Continue to support older residents to get involved in their local community by providing a programme of activities within sheltered housing schemes and the work of the community development co-ordinators.
- Continue to reward participation to ensure residents feel appreciated for their input and explore other options available, such as point-based systems and access to leisure facilities.
- Review the publicity of participation opportunities, including utilising Homelife to provide updates on the action plan, promote participation activities and provide feedback from resident involvement.
- Continue to work with partner organisations to facilitate events and activities on estates and ensure that residents get access to a range of cultural and sports events.

# Consultations Arrangements

The Housing and Regeneration Department has various consultation arrangements that are separate to its participation structure as they require bespoke approaches to meet best practice and statutory requirements.

The Council is committed to continuing to ensure these are effective processes and encourage residents to have their say.

## ■ Online consultations

The Council also undertakes online public consultations where appropriate, for example when implementing and reviewing policies and strategies. These are in addition to consultation through the formal participation structures (i.e. BRF). The Council uses a web-based consultation platform which enables residents to respond quickly and easily. Public consultations are also available in paper form on request for those who cannot access an online version. Public consultations will be promoted through publications such as Homelife or Brightside and through the Council's social media channels or website. Where appropriate, partner agencies and key stakeholders will be emailed with a notification of the online consultation. Furthermore, the Council is also committed to setting up a 'Get Involved Register' for residents who wish to get more involved with the Department and those who sign up to the register and choose to be notified of public consultations will also be emailed.

## ■ Major Works Consultation

The Council has a statutory duty to consult with leaseholders on major works schemes<sup>11</sup>. In addition to leaseholder consultation, the Council believes it is important to consult with tenants and therefore carries out a similar process with tenants. When schemes of major works are added to the Council's capital programme, consultation takes place with both tenants and leaseholders.

The consultation process is split into two stages and comments are invited at both stages: the Notice of Intention stage and the Section 20 stage. During the process, tenants and leaseholders are invited to a drop-in consultation meeting on the relevant estate with Council officers. A team of Consultation Officers are responsible for running the consultation and reviewing feedback.

## ■ Consultation Arrangements for Regeneration and Council-led Development

Both regeneration schemes and Council-led development are subject to bespoke forms of consultation with local residents and other stakeholders. These arrangements are independent of the Council's overall resident participation structures for Council managed properties.

## ■ Regeneration

The Council is committed to ongoing and meaningful engagement with residents in relation to large-scale regeneration projects which last many years. The engagement processes for the Council's regeneration schemes on Winstanley/York Road Estates and the Alton Estate are long term and each stage of engagement is comprehensive. The consultation process begins by working with residents to consider the various options and to ascertain the appetite for different levels of regeneration.

The Council is committed to giving residents a clear commitment of rehousing and compensation at the start of the process to ensure they have the confidence to consider the range of options fully.

<sup>11</sup> Section 20, Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.



Consultation is a continuous process over the years and includes open-days, public meetings, on site drop-in centres, regular newsletters and surveys.

### ■ Council-led Development

As part of the Council's approach to designing new homes under the Council-led Development programme, "Housing for All", it is committed to undertaking ongoing consultation with local residents and other stakeholders in the area of proposed development sites. Consultation begins in the pre-planning stage and allows the Council to obtain vital input into the early design stages of the Council's proposals. This predominantly takes the

form of local drop-in sessions which all affected residents are invited to attend or submit comments in writing if they cannot attend. As schemes progress, the Council, in its capacity as Planning Authority, will undertake a statutory planning consultation and this will include ongoing updates to stakeholders. This may include 'meet the contractor' events and regular newsletter updates from contractors working on development sites. Throughout the process, dedicated webpages are kept up to date with summary information as well as detailed plans, proposals, consultation material and frequently asked questions about development schemes.

## We will:

- Set up a regular piece in Homelife to notify residents when major works schemes are added to the schedule of works.
- Review literature in relation to major works consultation to ensure that the scope and purpose of the consultation is clear.
- Continue to ensure that affected residents are at the heart of planning decisions regarding Council-led developments and regeneration.

The Council will meet its statutory obligations utilising a range of consultation mechanisms designed to engage all affected residents, including open days, public meetings, on-site offices, and regular updates via newsletters and the Council's webpages.

## Appendix 1

# Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy Action Plan

Action	Target date for completion	Progress
Facilitate two focus groups per year. Prioritise the following topics: housing webpages, RA accreditation and major works.	On-going	A focus group to discuss the Council's Annual Report to Residents was held in July 2019. A focus group to review the Housing Webpages will be organised during 2019/20.
Review the RA Handbook through a readers' panel.	April 2020	Following the publication of the Strategy, the RWG participants will take part in a readers' panel to provide feedback on the RA Handbook and ensure it is in line with the new Strategy.
Increase publicity in relation to the HCC scheme and consider how best to manage the scheme as it grows (i.e. budget considerations).	November 2019	An article to publicise the scheme has been included in the September edition of Homelife and the Council will include a case study on HCCs in future issues.
Review the Housing Link programme and explore how the Council can use transactional surveys.	November 2019	A new programme of transactional surveys is currently being designed in conjunction with the Council's contractor. This will enable the Department to capture satisfaction with specific services as they are delivered and deal with any issues in real-time. This will be reviewed throughout its rollout to ensure that it effectively complements the existing STAR survey programme.
Review publicising of participation opportunities, including what is featured in Homelife, on the Council's website and social media channels.	April 2020	The Council will create branding to help publicise resident involvement and will include a designated page in Homelife from December to provide an update on the Strategy and involvement matters. The Council will set up a focus group to seek views on the Housing Webpages, including a review of the webpages relating to resident involvement.

Action	Target date for completion	Progress
Organise an initial RA conference for early 2020.	March 2020	
Design a programme of training for RAs and explore options for e-learning.	March 2020	RPOs are scheduled to undertake Train the Trainer training in September 2019 after which a programme of training will be devised.
Implement changes to constitutions and formal structures.	November 2019	
Provide additional support to RAs affected by changes to constitutions to meet accreditation criteria for 2020/21.	On-going	
Set up a participation register and encourage residents to join.	September 2020	
Consider the feasibility of resident-led 'mystery shopping' exercises to inspect estate conditions.	September 2020	
Conduct an annual poll of BRF members on a set of topics to be considered during the year.	September 2020	
Set up a regular piece in Homelife to notify residents when major works schemes are added to the schedule of works.	December 2019	
Update the Council's performance reports in line with recommendations from the RWG.	September 2020	Updates to the Area Housing Panel reports will be taken to the AHPs in September/October 2019. Updates to the Annual Report will be incorporated in the 2019/20 report ahead of the focus group.
Set up a process for AHP representatives to escalate items which they have requested on the AHP agenda.	June 2020	
Work with Chelsea Football Club to continue and expand the Chelsea Kicks programme.	On-going	
Explore other options available for rewarding participations, such as point-based systems and access to leisure facilities.	June 2010	



## Appendix 2

# Statutory Powers and Responsibilities

The table below details the various legislative responsibilities placed on local authorities in relation to resident participation and consultation.

**Table 1: Statutory Responsibilities in Relation to Consultation and Participation**

<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Section 105, Housing Act 1985	Requires public sector landlords to have arrangements to inform and consult secure tenants who are likely to be “substantially affected” by certain matters of housing management . This includes a requirement to publish details of the consultation arrangements and make them available.
Section 137, Housing Act 1996	Local authorities which have introductory tenants have a statutory duty to consult them on certain matters of housing management.
Section 27, Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Management Agreements) Order 2003);	Entering into a management agreement with another agency to manage all or some of the housing stock.  Section 27BA (inserted by paragraph 3 of Schedule 18 of the Housing Act 1996) allows the Secretary of State to make regulations to impose requirements to consult tenants or to consider representations made by tenants regarding the exercise of their management functions.
Right to Manage Statutory Guidance (2013)	Local authority tenants have had a statutory Right to Manage since 1994. The regulations were introduced to make it easier for residents to exercise their Right to Manage by providing a clear process for aspiring Tenant Management Organisations.
Section 27AB, Housing Act 1985 (added by Section 132, Leasehold Reform Housing and Urban Development Act 1993)	Local authorities in England and Wales may enter into a management agreement with a tenant management organisation (TMO).

<sup>12</sup> These are matters which in the landlord's opinion relate to management, maintenance, improvement or demolition of dwellings let on secure tenancies or the provision of services or amenities to such dwellings. Rents and service charges are specifically excluded from the definition.

Legislation	Responsibility
Section 106A and Schedule 3A, Housing Act 1985, as added by Section 6 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986	Voluntary disposal of local authority stock - local authorities must consult secure tenants before disposing of their homes to a private landlord or a registered social landlord.
Section 21, Housing Act 1985 and Section 111, Local Government Act 1972	Local authorities have the power to fund tenants' groups on the basis that support to tenants' groups is provided to assist and enable authorities to manage their housing
Section 429A, Housing Act 1985 (as inserted by Section 16, Housing and Planning Act 1986)	Availability of grants from the Secretary of State to facilitate tenant participation.
Section 137, Local Government Act	Local authorities may also incur expenditure which in their opinion is in the interests of their area or any part of it for all or some of its inhabitants.
Section 101 and 102, Local Government Act 1972	Local authorities have powers under Section 101 to delegate functions to a committee, sub-committee officer or another local authority.. Section 102 provides that persons who are not elected members of the council may be members of such sub-committees. Tenant members on council committees and sub-committees are treated as non-voting members by Section 13, Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
Housing and Regeneration Act 2008	Section 193 gives the Regulator of Social Housing the power to set standards relating to consumer matters, including methods for consulting and informing tenants and enabling tenants to influence or control the management of their accommodation or environment. The Regulator has issued the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard under this provision.

Draft

# Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy

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