

<b>Committee(s):</b> Housing Management Sub Committee	<b>Date(s):</b> 31 January 2013
<b>Subject:</b> Resident Involvement Second Year Evaluation	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community & Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<p><b><u>Summary</u></b></p> <p>This report provides Members with an overview and evaluation of the second year of the Resident Involvement strategy (2010-2013).</p> <p>The strategy (called a 'Plan') was agreed by the Community &amp; Children's Services Committee in November 2010, and has now been in operation for two years.</p> <p>This report highlights what has been accomplished in the second year, and presents the key objectives for the third year of the plan.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members are asked to note the contents of this report.</li> </ul>	

## **Main Report**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 As members are aware, involving social housing tenants in the management of their homes and estates is a regulatory requirement in England. The aim of the national standard 'Tenant Involvement and Empowerment' is to ensure that all tenants are put at the heart of their landlord's decisions.
- 1.2 The City of London's first three-year Resident Involvement Plan was agreed by Members of the Community & Children's Services Committee in November 2010.
- 1.3 The main aims of the Plan are to ensure that we keep residents informed about what we are doing, to offer a range of ways we consult with residents, and to ensure that we support residents to be actively involved in community activities and helping us to continuously improve our housing services.
- 1.4 The three year plan, which is the strategic document, is supported by an annual SMART action plan. This is monitored by residents and ensures progress is made on a continuous basis.

## **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 Appendix 1 sets out the completed year-two SMART action plan in detail, using a traffic light system of red and green to easily identify achievements and any delays that might have been experienced.
- 2.2 Our Resident Involvement service is characterised by the following core features:
- A dedicated team consisting of the Head of Involvement and Policy, the Resident Involvement Manager and the Resident Involvement Support Officer. We also have a new Communications Apprentice working with us for one year. The team's role is to implement the Resident Involvement Plan across all housing services, and to support and train residents and staff to be effectively involved in the delivery of the Plan so that we move to a position where residents are genuinely at the heart of our decisions.
  - 135 residents are actively involved, of which 76 are tenants. This compares with 80 residents actively involved from last year. This means that we have a larger pool of residents who give us their views and get involved in community activities.

### Impact Assessment of the Resident Involvement Service

- 2.3 The following section highlights some of the key achievements, benefits, and areas of improvement of our Resident Involvement service to date, which are linked to the aims in the Resident Involvement Plan:

#### **A. Customer Service**

- (i) With the Resident Involvement Improvement Group (RIIG), we agreed front-line customer service standards and produced Customer Service leaflets, which were laminated and given to all staff as a desk top reference. The aim is to ensure that no matter how a resident contacts us, we will give them a consistent service.
- (ii) We recruited and trained residents to take part in Mystery Shopping exercises and carried out our first pilot mystery shops of our new customer service standards. The results will be used by the Senior Management Team to plan service improvements, along with the results of other research undertaken in 2012.
- (iii) We co-ordinated and launched the texting service for residents. It is currently in use for the repairs service, with further services to come on board over the next few months. Estate staff can also use the service to send bulk one-off texts to inform people of estate matters quickly, i.e., lift breakdowns, power outages, etc.

## Areas for Improvement

- (iv) Customer research has indicated some inconsistency in the level of customer service residents receive, so more work will be done to ensure that all residents, no matter where they live or which team they contact, receive the same excellent service. This is a Senior Management Team priority for 2013.

### **B. Communications**

- (i) We co-ordinated production of a new tenant Welcome Pack, working with other teams, and got Residents' Associations to put in their own welcome letters and their newsletters. This supports estate staff to carry out professional sign-ups with new tenants.
- (ii) We reviewed all of our resident publications and agreed timeframes in an effort to ensure we send out timely and useful information.
- (iii) We have recruited a Communications Apprentice to help develop our new social media for Housing and to support the administration of resident surveys and other communications projects.
- (iv) We have designed a template for estate staff to produce their new twice yearly estate newsletters. This ensures that there is consistency in the design. We also arranged for training for the staff to be able to use the template.
- (v) We have set up a handy checklist for estate staff to request new leaflets for display in receptions so the process is streamlined. The purpose is to ensure all relevant information is displayed in receptions at all times, and helps the estate office do the checks quickly. We have received good feedback from estate staff to say that they find it easier to do the checks.

## Areas for Improvement

- (vi) We will support the departmental initiatives to improve its communications to residents, ensuring that high and consistent standards are met.

### **C. Resident Involvement**

- (i) We now have 261 residents on our Resident Involvement database, and of these, 198 are tenants (76%). 135 residents are actively involved with us. This means that 135 residents in the past year have been involved in at least one of the many involvement mechanisms we offer. We are pleased to have doubled the number of residents who have given us their involvement preferences over the past year.

- (ii) We delivered Committee Skills training and Equality & Diversity training to our registered Residents' Associations. This helps to ensure they carry out their roles properly and effectively, and move towards being much more independent.
- (iii) We helped residents fund and plan their estate parties for The Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the London 2012 Olympics to increase community spirit. We also offered free First Aid training to residents who were hosting Jubilee events. Jubilee parties were held on seven estates. We also helped get funding for Tudor Rose Court and the Mansell Street Estate for their Jubilee parties.
- (iv) We negotiated the use of time credits (SPICE credits) for resident involvement. Residents can earn time credits for doing work that benefits their communities, whether that is organising estate events or working with us to improve our services. This means our residents can 'cash in' their time credits at various businesses, like the Barbican Centre and Golden Lane Sport and Fitness (the former Golden Lane Leisure Centre).
- (v) We supported two Residents' Associations to create their first newsletters, which were well-received by residents. This ensures they keep in touch and report on what they are doing for the benefit of residents in a more formal way.
- (vi) We attended sheltered scheme meetings to discuss self-financing and other issues with sheltered residents, as they tend not to come to estate meetings. These were well attended.
- (vii) We agreed new Resident Involvement performance indicators with the RIIG. Agreeing these with residents ensure that we are striving to improve areas that are important to them.
- (viii) We organised and involved staff and residents in the second Resident Celebration Day, which saw a higher turn-out than last year and overwhelmingly positive feedback received.

#### Areas of Improvement

- (ix) Further work will be done to ensure staff involved with Residents' Associations are confident and clear in their roles so that a consistent service is provided.
- (x) We need to develop a more focused approach to involving young residents; social media being one initiative.

## **D. Digital Inclusion**

- (i) Working with Department of Community & Children's Services colleagues, we have secured free IT and internet training for residents on some of our larger estates.

### Areas for Improvement:

- (ii) We intend to extend access to this training, particularly in light of recent welfare reforms that will require people to access benefits on-line in the future.

## **E. Service/Policy Consultations**

- (i) We involved residents in the development of the revised Allocations policy and co-ordinated the public consultation process.
- (ii) We co-ordinated resident feedback in the creation of the HRA Business Plan.
- (iii) We co-ordinated resident consultation in reviewing our Decent Homes standard, the results of which have been fed into our asset management strategy development.
- (iv) We support residents to be involved in the re-development project on the Avondale Square Estate and in the Great Arthur House Cladding project. This ensures that residents are meaningfully involved in decisions that will affect them.
- (v) We co-ordinated the STAR tenant satisfaction survey, published the results to tenants and members, and held a session with Estate Management to discuss the results. We also co-ordinated follow-up qualitative research.
- (vi) We produced comprehensive guidance on how to run the Repairs Working Group, including how to produce the performance reports, for Technical Services who agreed to take over the group.

## **F. Welfare Reform**

- (i) We co-ordinate the information that goes to residents and staff to inform them of the changes and where to seek advice.
- (ii) We have attended most Residents' Association meetings over recent months to speak on welfare reform, which has resulted in constructive conversations and awareness raising.

## **G. Year Three**

(i) The key priorities for 2013 are:

- Involving residents in developing a new Housing Strategy (this may lead to changed/new priorities) and in developing the next RI strategy for 2014 onwards
- Welfare Reform and keeping residents informed
- Social Media & involving young residents
- ‘Co-regulation’ (developing our approach to scrutiny, complaints, self-assessment etc.)
- Supporting and developing our Residents’ Associations
- Setting up a Community Fund scheme to enable residents to help decide local estate spending priorities.

### **3. Corporate & Strategic Implications**

3.1 The Resident Involvement Plan supports the City of London’s corporate aim to ‘provide modern, efficient and high quality local services.’ Effectively involving residents leads to service improvements and value for money savings.

3.2 The Resident Involvement service supports the departmental aims and objectives of ‘Implementing Outcomes’, increasing stakeholder involvement/partnership working to drive service improvement, and improving value for money, efficiency and performance.

### **4. Implications – risk**

4.1 Resident Involvement is a core housing service, and we have minimised the risks to this service by having a comprehensive plan, which is regularly monitored, reviewed and reported on. We must be aware of services proposed or delivered through other departments in the City of London to ensure that residents are informed and involved where appropriate. Failure to do so may erode the trust and transparency we are building.

4.2 The budget to deliver the front-line service for the financial year 2012-13 is £43,500 (excluding staffing costs) which is on track. The budget is paid wholly out of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

### **5. Conclusion**

5.1 The 2011-2012 Resident Involvement SMART action plan has been mostly implemented. Whilst a couple of actions have been delayed,

this is only to give them more prominence in Year Three as their importance has grown.

5.2 The quality of involvement is very high. Our RI groups operate to consistent standards and receive regular training. Residents regularly report that they feel their input is valued by us.

5.3 The achievements in year two have brought important benefits, namely: identifying and implementing specific service improvements and value for money efficiencies.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Completed 2012 SMART Plan

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