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| Committee(s): Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee – For Decision | Dated: 14/02/23 |
| Policy and Resources Committee – For Decision | 23/02/23 |
| Subject: Delivering the Residential Reset | Public |
| Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly? | 1, 2, 3, 4, 9 and 10 |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | Y |
| If so, how much? | £150,000 |
| What is the source of Funding? | Policy Initiatives Fund |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department? | Y |
| Report of: Deputy Town Clerk | For Decision |
| Report author: Mark Gettleson, Head of Campaigns and Community Engagement | |

Summary

This report provides an overview of engagement and communications with the City’s residential population, a relationship shaped by its comparative size to our worker community (8,600 to 587,000) and with that of other authorities. It describes the way in which formal structures of community engagement and communications exist on our three managed estates, but are patchier outside. It puts consultation with our residents, including the City-wide residents’ meetings, within this wider context.

It proposes a concerted campaign be undertaken to ensure that we can reach more of our residents more easily, irrespective of where they live, and that a central timetable be drawn up to ensure we have a better picture of what the organisation is asking and saying to residents and when. The report asks for funding to deliver the eight City-wide residents’ meetings, which have been pledged by the organisation, but do not currently have budget to support, and wider activities to promote resident engagement. It asks for a Resident Campaigns and Communications Manager to be engaged for a period of 12 months to provide a central focus to deliver this work.

Recommendation(s)

Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee are asked to:

- Support the proposals below to deliver the Residential Reset.

Members of the Policy and Resources Committee are asked to:

- Support the proposals to deliver the Residential Reset.

- Authorise £150,000 in funding from the 2023/24 Policy Initiatives Fund, categorised as ‘Communities’ and charged to City’s Cash to support the City-wide residents meetings (£35,000), outreach and promotional activities to support resident engagement (£50,000) and the recruitment of a Resident Campaigns and Communications Manager to lead this work over a 12 month period (£65,000).

Main Report

Background

1. “Residential Reset” has been one of the key priorities of the Policy Chairman since he assumed office. At its core is a wish to overhaul the City Corporation’s engagement with those who live here and ensure that residents are seen as a strategic priority across the organisation. While there are many complex issues relating to resident engagement in the City, this report aims to draw some of these together and suggests recruiting a new temporary role to oversee a campaign and series of activities aimed at providing a holistic approach to our resident engagement challenge.

Our residential population

2. Engagement with our residential community has been shaped by its size in relation to our worker community, as well as its absolute size. The latest census estimate puts our residential population at 8,600 – which compares to our estimated 587,000 workers, with the latter making up more than 98% of our total community.
3. Due to the hybrid nature of our electoral system, whereby all eligible residents and a small proportion of workers are eligible to vote, residents made up 31% of voters on last year’s Ward List. 71% of these were in the legislatively defined “residential wards” of Aldersgate, Cripplegate, Portsoken and Queenhithe, together electing a fifth of Common Councillors and where at least 85% of voters are residents. Residents also make up a substantial proportion of the electorate in Farringdon Within (42%) and Tower (27%).
4. Including temporary and student accommodation, there are an estimated 8,005 residential properties in the City, approximately half of which are outside of residential wards. The fact that only 29% of registered resident voters are outside those wards may point to lower levels of engagement and a more transient population.
5. In absolute terms, our number of residents remains extremely small compared to other authorities. According to the 2021 census, the average residential population of a single ward elsewhere in Greater London is approximately 13,000; one and a half times the size of our total across the City.

Engagement on our estates

6. On our three managed estates in the Square Mile, responsibility for resident engagement falls within the Housing and Barbican directorate, who provide a dedicated on-site estate office, communications and a programme of activities. Each estate has an organised residents association which can be used for additional engagement and consultation, with formal channels of engagement on the Barbican especially strong, featuring organised networks of committees and sub-committees covering a range of topics.
7. Housing and Barbican also maintain email lists for each estate, which while the data cannot be shared beyond this team, can be used to share relevant information from the City Corporation that may be of use and interest to residents. The sign-up statistics for these emails are below, remembering that properties may have several residents. The Barbican Estate team estimate that approximately two thirds of Barbican Estate residents receive their email newsletter, which is sent out regularly with high open rates.

| Estate | Properties | Email sign-ups |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Barbican | 2,074 | 1,966 |
| Golden Lane | 575 | 196 |
| Middlesex Street | 250 | 124 |
| TOTAL | 2,899 | 2,286 |

Engagement outside our estates

8. For residents outside our managed estates, communications coverage is patchy. They are also less organised into formal residents groups than those living on our estates, though some are in contact with the City Corporation and with BIDs. While individual teams such as Planning hold email lists for specific purposes, there is no comprehensive way of reaching all our residents.
9. While all residential properties previously received a physical copy of the City Resident magazine, this ended in Summer 2021, and just 175 people have signed up to receive its email replacement, approximately 2% of our adult population. We must run a comprehensive multi-channel campaign to ensure a much higher proportion of City residents are persuaded to sign up for communications of this type, including gaining the permission of those on other email lists to receive them.

Consultation and engagement events

10. As an organisation, the City Corporation seeks to consult with its residents for statutory and other purposes. The above factors can mean that, in practice, a relatively small number of highly engaged residents from a particular part of our community are those most likely to give their opinion on City Corporation issues. Some officers in regular contact with residents suggest this can lead to “consultation fatigue” and further thought should be given to drawing up a consultation calendar across departments, attempting to ensure that residents are approached at an appropriate tempo.

11. Work should also be done, where appropriate, to ensure we're consulting early enough in the process for input to be meaningful – as well as better highlighting the sections of any proposals that may be subject to change, and the substantive effect resident input has produced. This reflects the approach set out in the recently published draft Developer Engagement Guidance produced by the Planning division. It may also be important to better delineate between resident consultation and communications that seek to explain as to why a certain initiative is being taken.
12. The expansion of the City-wide residents meetings to eight meetings a year (two meetings on four days), including one at each of our managed estates, will give more residents direct access to our elected members and officers, close to where they live. The recent meetings at Artizan Library saw almost 100 residents attend, with 72% of those completing the evaluation form saying the event was excellent or good.
13. Such formal settings, as well as many in-person consultations, while important, are likely to predominantly attract those already highly engaged in City life. In addition to these, we should explore more events that connect residents with members and officers in a less formal setting that allow relationships to build. It may be the case that while official meetings should be held out in the community, Guildhall and Mansion House should be used for more sociable activities, such as a Christmas event, increasing the number of residents who visit those special spaces. To this end, the small size of our resident population and large scale of our spaces is a significant advantage in growing our engagement and communications reach.

Use of data

14. The City Corporation undertakes numerous activities that connect us with residents at scale. These build up email lists used for that particular purpose. Working with City Solicitors, we should explore a form of words that would allow us to contact consenting residents for a host of engagement and non-statutory consultative processes, similar to the “strategic engagement” permissions used by IG. This would then be deployed across departments who regularly sign residents up to communicate with them about specific issues.
15. In the longer term, as is common practice in other authorities, we may wish to store information on our residents on a single CRM, with a 360-degree of their relationships and interaction with our organisation. This would enable us to better understand, engage and provide services for them.

Proposal

16. There is no single officer or team at the City Corporation with a holistic view or responsibility solely for engaging with our residents, irrespective of subject or where they live. This lack of a co-ordinated focus leads to a disjointed approach with significant gaps in our residential communications and engagement across the organisation.

17. It is proposed to recruit a Resident Campaigns and Communications Manager on a one-year contract at the equivalent of Grade E, reporting to the Head of Campaigns and Community Engagement, to oversee this programme and deliver for our entire residential community. They would take responsibility for the following:

- Develop and run a communications campaign to better engage our resident community with the City of London Corporation, focusing in particular on the collection of email addresses and creating effective content, online and offline, for residential audiences. Temporary staff and apprentices may also be engaged to help deliver this programme.
- Lead the delivery of the eight annual City-wide resident meetings, including invitations, venue hire and other logistics. Co-ordinate with other officers when required to ensure attendance and effective briefings for members. Explore additional informal events for residents to better connect them with the City Corporation.
- Co-ordinate with officers across the organisation looking to consult with residents and draw together planned consultations into a calendar, working to ensure these are presented in as clear, engaging and timely a manner as possible, investigating innovations from other authorities and internationally where appropriate.
- Work with the Housing team to help ensure the concerns and priorities of residents on our three managed estates are effectively fed back to our wider organisation and political leadership.
- Work across departments, and the Business Improvement Districts, to help improve engagement with residents outside our managed estates – including support with the creation of residents associations and other community activities. Identify and collate contacts in existing residents groups and ensure they are supported effectively.
- Liaise across City of London Corporation teams and institutions to ensure a resident offer and prioritisation is in place and well-communicated.
- Work with elected members with substantial residential communities in their wards, to ensure they have the support they need for resident engagement and that their concerns and ideas are fed back to officers.

18. It is proposed that the committee allocate £150,000 from the 2023/24 Policy Initiatives Fund to support its “Residential Reset” priority, including the pledged City-wide residents meetings (£35,000), outreach and promotional activities to support resident engagement (£50,000), and the recruitment of a Resident Campaigns and Communications Manager to lead this work over a 12 month period (£65,000).

Corporate & Strategic Implications

19. Strategic implications – Improving engagement with our resident community helps contribute to all elements of a flourishing society in the Square Mile, and helps us become better connected with our communities, digitally and physically.

20. Financial implications – It is proposed that the required funding of £150,000 is drawn from your Committee’s 2023/24 Policy Initiatives Fund, categorised under ‘Communities’ and charged to City’s Cash. The current uncommitted balance in the 2023/24 Policy Initiatives Fund is £574,000 prior to any allowances being made for any other proposals on today’s agenda.
21. Resource implications – Additional support may be called upon from across the organisation to assist with the activities outlined in this report.
22. Legal implications – Information collected on City residents as part of an engagement must be stored securely and only shared within the organisation in a way that is compliant with the GDPR and other data protection legislation.
23. Risk implications – Failing to better engage with our residents risks making our consultations and communications less meaningful and impactful, leading us to be less effective and open to criticism in the way we operate as an organisation.
24. Equalities implications – By engaging more of our residents in our activities on a fair and equal basis, especially those not currently involved in our consultations and decision-making processes, the proposals contained in this report help to support our equalities duties and aspirations.
25. Climate implications – By promoting digital communications and being able to reach more residents by email, we will reduce the need to physical communications in the longer term.
26. Security implications – Any information held on residents as part of this programme must be stored safely.

Conclusion

27. The activities and proposals contained in this report are aimed at improving communications, engagement and consultation with our entire resident community, in a way that is scalable, long-lasting and works across organisational silos. In so doing, it hopes to create a more vibrant and connected Square Mile and realise the vision laid out in the organisation’s Residential Reset priority.

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