



Department of Community & Children's Services
Housing Delivery Programme
Communication Strategy

Approved:	
Review Date:	
Author:	Michael Gwyther-Jones Head of New Developments & Major Projects

Housing Delivery Programme

Communication Strategy

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Our Approach to Communications
- 3.0 Communication Aims
- 4.0 Communication Objectives
- 5.0 Stakeholders and Partners
- 6.0 Our Residents – Key Stakeholders
- 7.0 Outline of the Development Programme
- 8.0 Overarching Key Messages
- 9.0 Key Audience Messages
- 10.0 Channels for Communication
- 11.0 Resources and Budget

1.0 Introduction

The City of London Corporation (CoLC) is seeking to deliver 700 affordable new homes by 2026. The Housing Delivery Programme currently includes proposals to expand homes on the City's existing social housing estates by 25%. Sixteen opportunities for development have been identified in over 10 locations which, if developed in their entirety could deliver around 730 new homes.

The CoLC has developed a matrix to formalise a priority for its new housing schemes. The matrix takes into consideration a number of factors including, housing needs (25%), deliverability (30%), value for money (30%), sustainability (5%), positive impact/benefits (5%), and reputation (5%).

The Housing Delivery Programme is the largest financial investment CoLC has made to increase its local authority housing stock since the 1970s.

The approach adopted by the Department of Community and Children's Services (DCCS) is informed by focusing on the views and needs of our communities and service users. This fits neatly with one of our five strategic priorities, 'Developing strong neighbourhoods and ensuring people have a decent place to live'. The Department aims to bring about real and lasting improvements in the quality of life for our communities and residents. We will look beyond the provision of more and better housing to develop sustainable neighbourhoods with safe, thriving, mixed communities whose members are able to afford to live locally and make an effective contribution to the City's economy.

2.0 Our Approach to Communications

The purpose of this strategy is to confirm our commitment to communicating effectively for the duration of the Housing Delivery Programme. We will:

- Identify all stakeholders that will be affected by this ambitious development programme.
- Use and analyse research to help us understand the needs, expectations and preferences of all stakeholders.
- Develop and communicate appropriate messages in support of the various projects.
- Devise appropriate methods, communication channels and opportunities for engaging directly with all stakeholders.
- Ensure the programme is delivered with respect to stakeholders' needs and expectations at all stages of the projects.

3.0 Communication Aims

By delivering this strategy and associated work plan we aim to:

- Demonstrate the leadership and entrepreneurial role of City of London Corporation.
- Support the strategic priorities of the DCCS Business Plan to deliver growth in affordable housing and deliver best value for money.
- Highlight and demonstrate that we are providing new homes that will improve the quality of life for residents; particularly for those who are vulnerable or in poverty.
- Meet the aims of the HRA Business Plan and Housing Strategy to increase the supply of affordable housing.
- Support the business case for new investment in social housing that will lead to increased income for CoLC through rents, Council Tax and other local and government led initiatives including the New Homes Bonus.

4.0 Communication Objectives

There is a need to communicate, highlight and promote:

- The programme, the projects and the scale of investment.
- Principles of delivery – quality, place making, sustainability.
- Energy efficiency.
- Information about each strand of the project and the development of specific messages and communication activity around each.
- Progress of the programme and projects to stakeholders.
- How stakeholders can contribute to the project going forward.
- Engagement with press and media (local, regional, national and trade).

5.0 Stakeholders and Partners

Key stakeholders and partners who have a vested interest in the success of the project are:

Internal

- City of London Corporation officers;
- Ward Members;
- Allocated Members;
- City of London Corporation Committees, including Community & Children's Services Committee, Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee, Health & Wellbeing Board, Planning Committee, Projects Sub-Committee.

External

- City of London Tenants and Leaseholders;
- Resident and other Community groups;
- Local residents affected by the development and delivery of new homes;
- Members of the public;
- Local councillors where the development and delivery of new homes takes place;
- Local businesses where development and delivery of new homes takes place;
- Registered Providers of Social Housing;
- NHS and health partnership organisations including London Borough of Hackney;
- Developers / contractors;
- Homes and Communities Agency;
- Greater London Authority;
- Mayor's Housing Covenant Programme;
- Third sector organisations;
- Local private sector landlords;
- Landlords' representative organisations;
- Educational institutions and students;
- Potential applicants for new homes;
- Press and media (local, regional, national and trade).

Additional secondary stakeholders who can assist with access to networks and promotion and success of the programme are:

- Neighbourhood Development and Engagement Team;
- Area Housing Managers and Estate Managers;
- Corporate Communications.

6.0 Our Residents – Key Stakeholders

Devoting the right amount of time and resources to effective communication and stakeholder engagement is vital when developing and delivering any project.

In order to explore and progress development opportunities on residential sites owned by CoLC, consultation with existing residents is considered a high priority to obtain local support for the proposals.

The proposals may include direct development or the sale of land for others to develop. The CoLC recognises the need to identify robust, workable solutions that not only meet the needs of the City and the community, but which enrich the economy and enhance social and environmental wellbeing.

Development and regeneration of housing estates is a complex process. The approach may be the best possible in financial or operational terms, and the benefit to the wider community may be well established but the impact on each individual resident cannot be underestimated.

It is essential to initiate a carefully considered resident engagement strategy backed by rigorous compliance to statutory consultation requirements. Resident opposition can become a powerful barrier to the development. For example, a challenge may be that there is no apparent benefit to existing residents. For example, they may not be getting new homes but will be living in an area more densely populated once the development has been completed.

A focused review of the issues that affect each estate will be considered in detail when selecting the preferred delivery route.

The project teams will need to consider what tangible benefits can be offered to the existing residents during the development, and how each development will benefit all residents when the schemes are completed. Some examples that may be appropriate could include any of the following:

Opportunity to move home – If homes are over or under occupied, residents could be given the option to move into a new home on the estate. Family homes that comprise multiple adults could be offered smaller homes i.e. one-bed and two-bed properties to free up family housing.

Opportunity for home ownership - Offer transferrable RTB discount to a new property and intermediate housing options offered.

Housing Estate Regeneration – Proposals to include improvements to urban design and public realm –enhancing permeability, defensible space, security, landscaping, and creating quality open space people will use and promote health and wellbeing to the community.

Opportunity for Amenity - Consider the creation of new amenities such as community gardens and outdoor recreation and play spaces. This benefit will obviously be subject to finding appropriate sources of finance

Generate Social Value - Promote local employment opportunities such as apprenticeships, work experience and investment in the local community.

7.0 Outline of the Housing Delivery Programme

Delivery of the development programme will be through a variety of routes. Each option will be assessed against a range of criteria such as:

- Prioritisation;
- Housing Needs;
- Delivery Potential;
- Value for money;
- Sustainability;
- Ability to attract match funding.

The delivery programme includes:

New Build Schemes

The first eight sites where we will build new residential accommodation have been identified. These sites will deliver approximately 200 new homes by 2020. The first sites will focus on smaller homes to help address the issue of under occupancy, meet the challenges of welfare reform and encourage older tenants to move out of family homes.

Outline of Key Messages

- This is the first time the City of London is building new social housing in decades.
- The programme helps to ensure that economic growth is inclusive and shared across all sections of the community.
- The programme demonstrates our commitment to social housing and the contribution it makes to people's lives and their health and wellbeing.
- Increasing its social housing stock will meet the targets placed upon CoLC by the Greater London Authority (GLA).

- Increasing social housing stock will reduce pressure on the waiting list for local authority housing, help with mobility for existing tenants, and contribute to a reduction in the number of people affected by welfare reform.

Acquisitions from private developers either ‘off the shelf’ or off-plan

This is an efficient and cost effective way to deliver new homes quickly, particularly when there is an opportunity to negotiate the price through bulk purchases. Each option of this type will be assessed by what is on site, how it might meet social need, quality and value for money.

Outline of Key messages

- This is a cost effective approach that may rapidly add to the housing stock owned by the City of London.
- It contributes to the creation of mixed tenure communities.
- It helps to support the local economy by creating jobs and maintaining employment in the construction industry.

Repurchase of Right to Buy properties and acquisition and refurbishment of empty properties.

This is an effective way of adding to social housing supply to meet CoLC’s strategic objectives. This method is partially supported by funding from the Homes & Community Agency. This work stream will also include refurbishment of redundant buildings on housing estates.

Outline of Key Messages

- This is a quick and cost effective approach that will increase CoLC’s housing stock.
- Requests to buy back former Council properties will be assessed against a range of criteria including the size, type of property, quality and value for money.
- This approach will help to reduce the blight that may be caused by empty properties and add to the viability of an area.

Use Right to Buy receipts to part fund new housing by Registered Providers.

Support a number of new developments by Registered Providers (RPs) with 30% costs being provided by CoLC through RTB receipts. The RPs would match the remaining 70% funds through their own resources or other forms of financial support.

Outline of Key Messages

- This method of providing financial support for Registered Providers would maximise the number of new homes being built in the City by adding to other funding streams.

- This would demonstrate CoLC's commitment to working in partnership with the Housing Association initiatives in the London region.

8.0 Overarching Key Messages

- The Housing Delivery Programme demonstrates our commitment to social housing. We acknowledge the important role social housing has in contributing to the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- CoLC is increasing its owned and managed housing stock in substantial numbers for the first time in several decades.
- The Housing Development Programme helps to ensure that the economic growth of the City is inclusive and shared across all sections of the community.
- Increasing social housing stock will reduce pressure on the housing waiting list, help with mobility for existing tenants and contribute to a reduction in the number of people affected by welfare reform.
- CoLC is delivering this project using creative and innovative methods, taking advantage of new opportunities as they arise, and making best use of our existing assets.
- CoLC has established the type, size and locations of new homes through research into demand in local communities. Services across the CoLC is working together on this project to ensure that the needs of different customers will be met; including older and disabled people
- The project is about much more than simply building new homes. It is also about place making, sustainability and making best use of existing stock. This will add to CoLC's portfolio of homes and contribute to a mixture of tenures in communities across London.
- We have identified the first sites for the development of new social housing and we aim to deliver around 200 new homes by 2020. These will be built to a high standard with quality, flexibility of design and energy efficiency as central concepts.

9.0 Key Audience Messages

The Housing Delivery Programme has a series of projects, work streams and elements that sit under the main delivery plan. For each element of the programme, we will develop a series of key messages to meet all or some of the following criteria:

- The rationale behind each element;
- Scale of investment;
- Design and quality;
- Where we are building the new homes;
- What we are building, acquiring or selling;
- Why we have chosen this site or these properties;
- How the local community will benefit;
- When we will work start and how long will it take;
- Who will benefit from the development and how the new homes will be allocated;
- Others as identified.

10.0 Channels for Communication

- Dedicated publications;
- CoLC.gov website and promo areas;
- Press and media releases;
- Social Media;
- Distribution networks – One stop centres, Housing Offices, Libraries, Job Shops, Community centres, Corporation Buildings, Education establishments and staff facilities.
- Traditional advertising mediums – radio, bus and rail, shopping centres and public meetings;
- Briefing notes and sessions;
- Partner websites and publications;
- Others as identified.

11.0 Resources & Budget

- The primary resource which will contribute to communication activity will be officer time.
- A new post for a Communications Manager has been identified with responsibility for the implementation of the Housing Delivery Programme Communication Strategy and associated Communication Plan.

- Initial work will need minimal spend as the focus will be on media activity.
- During the construction and re-letting phases, there will be print and various hard copy items with associated costs that will need to have an agreed budget. The Communications Manager will be tasked with developing this work and identifying and managing projected spend.

DRAFT