

Appendix 1:

Draft Resident Involvement Strategy (including Action Plan 2023-24)

The Resident Involvement Strategy itself will be reviewed annually until its expiry in 2027, however it is a dynamic document which will be continually developed and updated.

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL



PROPERTY & HOUSING SERVICE

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

2022 – 2027

Epping Forest District Council – working in partnership with residents

Introduction

Epping Forest District Council wants to ensure our residents – tenants, leaseholders or anyone living in an area where there is Council-owned social housing – have every opportunity to tell us what they want from the Property & Housing Service. By keeping you informed and actively listening to your views, we can improve and tailor our services to meet your needs.

Our new five-year Resident Involvement strategy is centred around five key aims, which will enable us to deliver meaningful resident involvement. The below summarises how residents can become involved and details the benefits that this will bring to our residents.

Why are we doing this?

We are proud of the services we provide to our residents. However, we are always seeking new ways to improve those services and ensure that they are tailored to our residents' needs and aspirations.

Customers are at the heart of everything we do, so we have refreshed our Resident Involvement strategy to extend the ways in which you can be involved, providing ways which are more attractive, easier to take part in, and will result in real changes and improvements to services.

Through our new Strategy, you will have the opportunity to influence and be involved in the formulation of housing policies; the setting of standards; have scrutiny of the landlord's performance; make recommendations for improvement and be able to influence the management of our Council housing and related services.

By providing a wide range of opportunities for your voice to be heard, we will ensure that more informed decisions are made. As a social housing landlord, we will also work to meet the requirements of the Social Housing Regulator, measures set out in the Charter for Social Housing Residents, and other related legislation (see Appendix A).

Our Vision

Our vision for the Property and Housing Service is to “Create Great Places Where People Want to Live”.

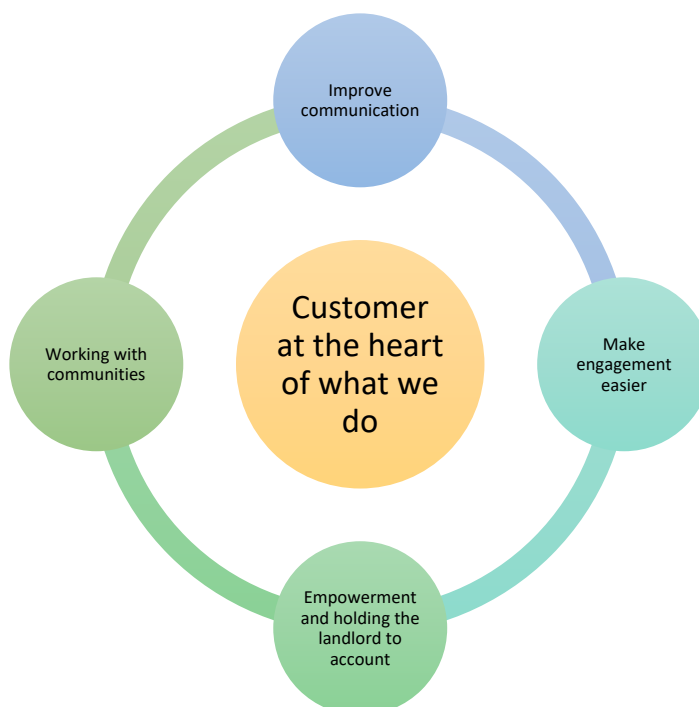
In order to do this, we must listen to what our residents want. We asked our Co-Create Group of involved residents to tell us what good resident involvement looked like to them and adopted these principles in the development of this strategy.

The principles that our Co-Create Group conceived are as follows:

1. Tenants and leaseholders are placed at the heart of everything the landlord does;
2. Information is provided to residents in a timely manner about services and decisions which may affect them;
3. The views of residents are actively sought and respected by the Council;
4. Sufficient opportunity is offered for residents to be involved in ways that suit them, at all different levels;
5. Residents are able to influence decision-making, shape future services and hold their landlord to account;
6. Residents are helped to understand the impact of their involvement, how their contribution informs decision making and helps to shape services;
7. Outcomes following a resident involvement activity are always communicated back to residents and any positive news or achievements are celebrated.

Our Aims

Our five key aims as shown below.



1. Residents at the heart of what we do

This aim underlines our view of our residents as partners in delivering the Strategy outcomes. We want to ensure that our plans, decisions and actions are made with *your* hopes and ambitions first and foremost in mind.

Leading from the very top of our organisation, we will work hard to create a resident involvement culture which values the positive contribution, that involved residents play, in the provision of our Property & Housing Services.

How we will achieve this

We will expand our core values and behaviours, placing a responsibility for resident involvement on all members of the Property & Housing Service. Existing staff and elected Members will be equipped with the training and appropriate resources to support resident involvement activities. We aim to develop an induction programme with residents and implement it for all new staff members, raising the profile of resident involvement and ensuring everyone is aware of the benefits and outcomes it brings.

You will be consulted right from the start of each new project or key decision and your views will be heard and acted upon, right up until a service is delivered. We will continue to listen and respond to your voice for as long as our service continues.

The Housing Sector is constantly changing, with a range of new legislation, best practice and guidance being published. We will aim to provide you with regular updates to help you understand any changes which may affect you; to explain the Council's responsibilities and where required any response to these changes and promote how you can take part in national conversations. We will have a separate strategy for ensuring that residents are driving the response to plans in relation to building regulations and fire safety.

Following a resident involvement activity, outcomes will be communicated back to residents and any positive news or achievements celebrated.

2. Making engagement easier

We want to make it as easy as possible for your voices to be heard and for you to have a say on housing matters which affect you.

How we will achieve this

We will refresh our Tenant and Leaseholder Census, to better understand who you are and how you wish to be involved. This will enable us to tailor our engagement opportunities for you and make it easier for you to be involved.

Provision of a wide-ranging suite of options for involvement that make use of successful traditional methods, embrace more innovative and/or digital engagement opportunities and will enable you to pick and choose the activities that suit you, giving you options as to how and when you wish to participate.

Residents will be encouraged to take part in as many involvement opportunities as they wish. Whilst many of the activities require no specialist knowledge, there are some opportunities that we know residents may appreciate some training or additional support. Where this is the case and to boost participants' confidence, we will provide training, create support networks and hold special events.

We are implementing a new computer system, which features an interactive customer portal, making it easier for us to engage with you and for you to provide us feedback. Feedback will be used to identify trends, which will help us to continuously improve the services we provide to you.

Where barriers to using digital technology exist, we will aim to ensure that activities are varied, accessible and inclusive. Wherever possible, we will look to use a mixture of engagement tools to capture a broad range of views, in turn making it easier for you to be involved, whatever your circumstances. In addition, our team of trained Digital Champions will be on hand to support you to become involved digitally. For some specific resident involvement activities, where available we will loan smart tablets to enable participation.

3. Resident empowerment and holding the landlord to account

We value the role that our empowered residents play in service delivery. We believe that our tenants and leaseholders should be kept informed about how we are performing, what decisions we are making, how we spend our income (rent received from Council tenants) and should have opportunity to challenge us and tell us where they feel improvements are needed.

How we will achieve this

By working with you to understand what performance measures are important to you and by reporting back to you against our performance of those measures.

By providing you with a clear breakdown of how our income is being spent, so that you can challenge us if you think our expenditure is not providing value for money, or if our income is not being spent on matters which matter most to you.

By ensuring that feedback from all resident involvement activities flows through local and strategic groups, making certain that your voices are integrated in service planning, monitoring and improvement.

By publishing information on complaints, including lessons learnt, trends and how these have been used to improve our services. We will also publish findings from any consultations, tenant satisfaction surveys and mystery shopping exercises and will work with you to raise standards where necessary.

We will look to refresh our existing Housing Service Standards, taking into account what matters most to you and will report back to you annually on those standards.

We aim to provide opportunities for residents to become empowered to have input into and responsibility for decision making. Our resident-led strategic Panels will consider how well we are complying with the Social Housing Regulator's Consumer Standards and other key statutory obligations. They will look at overall performance and will make recommendations for further scrutiny and how our services may be improved.

We will increase the number of resident representatives on the Select Committee for Communities, ensuring that our Member Councillors make key policy decisions with the tenant's voice in mind.

We will develop resident involvement opportunities in new areas such as scrutiny, complaints, procurement and recruitment.

At a local level, we will consult residents on the scope and delivery of local projects and will seek feedback, which will be published widely for residents to view. We will keep residents informed against progress made and will provide opportunities for resident scrutiny.

4. Improving communication

We are seeking to create open and clear communication channels between the Property & Housing Service and you. Whether you are looking to provide feedback, make a complaint about any aspect of the Service, or simply want to report a repair, we are aiming to make communication as easy as possible for our residents.

How we will achieve this

We will make it as easy as possible for you to communicate with us by whatever means you choose.

Also, by producing a range of communications to keep residents informed. We will work with you to understand what information residents want to know and ensure that our communications are easy to understand, respectful and strike the right tone.

Our new computer system will enable us to interact with you more effectively, allowing us to tailor resident involvement opportunities to individuals or groups of residents, take quick polls and run surveys.

We intend to provide a range of opportunities, including in-person events and online meetings, where residents can speak directly to staff and Managers and make their views known.

We will deliver interactive online webinars and engaging communications such as magazines, leaflets and social media, which will include contributions from residents themselves.

We are going to build a new engaging website which will promote the new ways that you can *“Get Involved”* and will advertise forthcoming events and involvement opportunities, as they arise. The website will showcase projects, keep residents informed about matters which affect them and celebrate good news stories and successes among other things.

We will develop a *“you said, we did”* approach to feedback. To show you how your contribution shapes the services we deliver, we will share this regularly with you through our newsletter, social media and website.

5. Working with our communities

We want to work with you to *“Create Great Places Where People Want to Live”*, where our Council housing and estates are viewed as privileged parts of the District and that you are proud to call home.

How we will achieve this

We will work with community representatives to bring about the changes that you want most, by working closely with existing Residents’ Associations and by empowering Champions to represent you and your neighbours. We will promote and facilitate the development of new empowered Residents’ Groups across the District.

We aim to get to know our communities well, by regularly seeking feedback about your neighbourhoods. Feedback will be used to shape future priorities.

Activities such as Estate Inspections and Growing Projects will position residents as central participants and resident engagement opportunities will be introduced throughout a tenancy, starting with ‘Meet Your Neighbour’ events in new-build properties and through the whole range of *“Ways to Get Involved”*.

By continuing to build strong links with our partners and local voluntary groups to deliver projects to the benefit of our residents and the wider community.

It is our hope that taking part in resident involvement activities will provide a range of benefits to participants that are separate and fall outside of the direct influence on services. It is anticipated that these benefits may lead to increased confidence, social connections

and even new skills to add to a CV. The benefits to you can be even greater than to the Property & Housing Service itself.

Final outcomes from resident involvement activities will be reported to you via the Annual Resident Involvement Impact Report. The report will detail which involvement activities represented the greatest impact and best value.

Ways to get involved

Through the creation of a new suite of resident involvement activities, we will ensure that a wide range of opportunities exist for you which allow you to be involved as much or as little as you wish.

The table below shows the wide range of ways in which we will work with, listen to and act upon your views and how you can directly influence our decision-making.

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stronger Communities Select Committee | | | | | Purple Tier opportunities place residents at the centre of Council Member decision making processes |
| Tenant & Leaseholder Panel | | | | | Panels in the Yellow Tier act as a consultative and decision-making body |
| Fire & Building Safety Panel | Scrutiny Panels | Focus Groups (Strategic / Policy Matters) | Continuous Improvement Groups | Sheltered Housing Forum | Green Tier activities provide you with an opportunity to help review and shape the overall Property & Housing Service |
| Complaints Scrutiny Panel | Recruitment Champions | Procurement Champions | | | |
| Estate Walkabouts | Resident Inspectors | Block / Street Champions | Growing Champions | Meet Your Neighbour events | Orange Tier ranges from face to face, in-person activities to activities that you can engage with from the comfort of your own home |
| Community Champions | Resident Writers | Armchair Reviewers | Mystery Shoppers | Annual Residents Conference | |
| Information Stations / | Surveys / Polls / Focus | Chatterbox Live / Online | Residents Associations | Community Events | Blue Tier opportunities enable residents to take |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Informal Pop ups | Groups (Operational Matters) | | | | part in one-off (or infrequent) events, as and when they wish to do so |
| Social Media | Ad-hoc newsletters, leaflets, publicity | Webinars | Estate based consultation | Other consultation | Purple Tier lists ways you can stay informed |
| Handbooks | Annual RI Impact Assessment | Bi-Annual Newsletter | Complaints Reporting | Annual Report to Tenants & Leaseholders | Grey Tier shows the formal reporting/information distribution which will serve to demonstrate how all of our activities are helping to shape the Property and Housing Service |

How will we measure the impact and what will success look like?

As we roll out the strategy, we intend to capture information about each involvement activity delivered, who we are engaging with, the cost of that engagement and what is being achieved.

We will evaluate the effect of resident involvement and the difference it makes to the services provided by the Property & Housing Service through an Impact Assessment. The Impact Assessment will allow us to demonstrate the changes that have been made as a direct consequence of your involvement and identify which involvement activities represent the greatest impact and best value.

When we know who is getting involved, we can work together to target those who are not represented or not as involved, understand the reasons why and try to encourage their engagement.

By 2027 we expect to have:

- a range of engagement and involvement opportunities in place, which are well attended and supported by residents
- embedded a resident involvement culture across the Property & Housing Service
- implemented a framework for resident involvement which delivers greater levels of scrutiny by residents and accountability to residents
- increased levels of tenant satisfaction that a) the Council listens to views and acts

upon them and b) with opportunities to make views know

- completed a tenant census to better understand who our tenants and leaseholders are and how they wish to be communicated with and involved
- implemented a new computer system to handle our resident involvement needs and make communicating with our residents easier and more tailored
- developed and implemented a new webpage dedicated to resident involvement

We will regularly review the progress made towards this strategy and will continue to seek out best practice so that we can continuously improve how we involve our tenants, leaseholders and residents living on Council-owned housing estates. This will enable us to be more flexible and become adaptable to a changing environment, if we need to.

Appendix A

Statutory and regulatory requirements

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England:

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) regulates registered providers of social housing to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector, which is able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. The regulatory framework for social housing in England is based on three economic standards and four consumer standards that all registered social housing providers must adhere to. This includes the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment (Consumer) Standard 2017, which sets expectations for registered social housing providers to provide choice, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants, to have a clear approach to complaints, and to provide a wide range of opportunities for tenants to have influence and be involved. The RSH's role is to intervene where there has been a failure to meet the standards, which has caused, or could have caused, serious harm to tenants.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents:

In 2020, Government published its White Paper "*The Charter for Social Housing Residents*", setting out to raise the standard of social housing and meet the aspirations of residents throughout the country, both today and into the future.

The Charter covers seven key themes as follows:

1. To be safe in your home
2. To know how your landlord is performing
3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
4. To be treated with respect
5. To have your voice heard by your landlord
6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
7. To be supported to take your first step to home ownership

Whilst resident involvement runs throughout the White Paper, of particular relevance to this strategy is Chapter Five, "*To have your voice heard by your landlord*", which requires landlords to ensure that residents are a key part of their governance and that consumer-led assurance arrangements are in place. Tenants who do not wish to attend formal meetings or join a formal group must have ways to feed back to their landlord, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their needs identified, with landlords tailoring their engagement opportunities. The paper places an expectation on the RSH to require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually encourage, improve and support engagement with their social housing tenants.

Information will be published annually and made available to tenants on how their landlord is performing in key areas of service delivery, in accordance with a new suite of 22 tenant satisfaction measures. Further, there will be a stronger

role for the RSH, particularly in relation to the consumer standards which will include a new periodic inspection programme.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Regulator for Social Housing published its new Tenant Satisfaction Measures standard on 21st September 2022, which means that from 1st April 2023 all social housing providers must collect and publish a wide range of performance information. There are 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures, covering complaints, neighbourhood, anti-social behaviour, repairs and safety. Ten of these will be measured by landlords directly, and 12 will be measured by landlords carrying out tenant perception surveys. These measures will be reported from April 2023 and will give tenants transparent and meaningful information about their landlord, and will also help the RSH ensure that landlords meet the new consumer standards.

The Building Safety Act 2022:

The Building Safety Act 2022 received royal assent on 28 April 2022 and is a hugely significant piece of legislation which overhauls the way residential buildings are constructed and maintained in the UK following the Grenfell Tower disaster in 2017, while protecting the rights of leaseholders.

Of particular relevance to this strategy are the provisions which relate to engagement with residents. Whilst not yet in force, providers of social housing will be required to have in place, resident engagement strategies that allow residents to obtain information and be consulted on matters and decisions affecting the safety of their building, thereby ensuring that residents are empowered to play an effective role in ensuring their building is, and continues to be safe. Whilst this requirement, currently, applies only to landlords managing or owning higher-risk buildings, the Council views this as good practice to engage as future proofing across its entire housing stock.

Whilst this strategy pays regard to the Building Safety Act, it is our intention to adopt a separate resident engagement strategy in respect of building safety, which will set out the Council's approach to resident engagement generally in this area. Further, for each high-risk building, there will be a tailored resident engagement strategy which may be reviewed and approved by the Building Safety Regulator as part of its statutory role as may be required.

The Social Housing Bill

On 8th June 2022, Government published its Social Housing Bill, putting into law a host of reforms to the regulation of the social housing sector. The aim of the Bill is to have *“more people living in decent, well looked-after homes enjoying the quality of life they deserve”*.

In summary the bill proposes to:

- levy unlimited fines on failing social housing providers
- drive up standards and bolster the regulator's powers to act
- give tenants the right to obtain information from landlords
- give tenants the right to rate the services provided by landlords
- tackle damp and cold living conditions
- subject social landlords to a new inspection regime as set out by the Regulator for Social Housing.

Other relevant statutory requirements are:

The Housing Act 1985:

- Provision of information about tenancies (*Section 104*)
- Consultation on matters of housing management (*Section 105*)
- Information about housing allocation (*Section 106*)
- Consultation before disposal to a private landlord (*Section 106A*)

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended):

- Primary homelessness legislation under Part 7
- Primary allocations legislation under Part 6

The Equality Act 2010:

The Council has a duty to ensure the following:

- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (i.e. their age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; gender, and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic, and those who do not share it;
- Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low; and,
- Ensure people from all sections of our community are given equal opportunity to participate.

Data Protection:

The Privacy Notice (Resident Involvement), may be found at <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Privacy-notice-Property-housing-services-Resident-involvement.pdf>

Localism Act 2011:

The 2011 Localism Act gave people more power over what happens in their neighbourhood, including:

- The Community Right to Bid giving community groups the right to bid to buy community buildings and facilities that are important to them
- The Community Right to Challenge allowing voluntary and community groups to run a local authority service where they believe they can do so differently and better. This may be the whole service or part of a service
- Neighbourhood planning measures allowing communities to shape new development by coming together to prepare neighbourhood plans
- The Community Right to Build allowing local communities to propose small-scale, site-specific, community-led developments
- The Community Right to Reclaim Land giving communities the right to under-used or unused land owned by public bodies is brought back into public use