

URN: 21-038

Subject: Resident Engagement Strategy

Report to: ELT 25 August 2021
Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee 8 November 2021

Report by: Russell Heath, Resident Engagement Officer

SUBJECT MATTER

This report provides an outline of the development of the Resident Engagement Strategy. It seeks adoption of the strategy to support and expand how the Council engages and involves tenants across the Housing Service.

RECOMMENDATION

That Committee:

- 1. Adopt the Resident Engagement Strategy**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 1 October 2020 a presentation was provided to the Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee detailing what work had been carried out to date on Resident Engagement and to seek views on the proposed approach for the Resident Engagement Strategy.

2 RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

- 2.1 The aim of the Strategy is to clearly set out the Council's commitment to listening to residents, involving residents, and making sure they are part of the decisions the Council make in relation to the Housing Service. It is designed to complement the existing community structures and role of members who play a key role in representing and supporting residents to address their concerns.
- 2.2 The Strategy identifies that the vision for Resident Engagement is to make sure residents feel listened to, are able to influence decisions, hold the Council to account and work in partnership to make positive changes.
- 2.3 The Strategy sets out three strands to engagement:
 - Your Area: supporting residents to continue to be involved where they live including Community Representatives, monitoring the standards of services across estates and attending local get togethers. Support residents to improve their local environment and community health and wellbeing through the small community grant
 - Your Voice: aimed at residents who are happy to be involved from home through online surveys

- Your Service: being part of face-to-face groups including service improvement panels, groups and projects and holding the Council to account through reviewing and challenging performance.

2.4 The Strategy was developed with the input of residents. Acknowledging the challenges of meeting face to face, resident views were collated from the initial series of community drop-ins (pre -pandemic) and an online survey and meeting. Through these activities the aims and objectives and the support offered to enable residents to participate were agreed.

2.5 The strategy will be reviewed on a regular basis with residents to make sure it is delivering what it has set out to do through an annual action plan. The Strategy is designed to be an accessible document and is attached as Appendix A. In addition, an action plan has been developed which identifies what the Council will do and how the success of the strategy will be measured which will allow continuous improvements to be made to the resident engagement approach of the Council. The action plan is attached at Appendix B.

3 RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

3.1 Following the previous update, the Housing Service has continued to embed and grow the opportunities for Resident Engagement. The new approach of focusing on Your Voice, Your Area and Your Service has been well received with more residents signing up to help either from home or across the borough.

3.2 The amount of insight received from residents has been expanded through increasing the number of transactional surveys carried out. Focus has been on the views and experiences of tenants moving into their new home, when reporting anti-social behaviour, closed tenancy support cases and understanding the impact of the tenancy review visits. These surveys are used to refine and improve services.

3.3 Different digital approaches including the use of QR codes, different survey software and using the Love Clean Streets App have been trialled to increase engagement opportunities.

3.4 An update on Resident Engagement forms part of the six-monthly Council Housing Compliance and Performance report to committee allowing members to retain oversight of Resident Engagement.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The Resident Engagement Strategy sets out the Council’s approach to resident engagement to ensure that residents are able to hold the Council to account in the way the Housing Service is delivered and sets out the ways that residents are able to engage with the Council and ensure that customer insight supports improvements in service delivery. The strategy provides the framework thorough which the voice of our residents is heard. The strategy is supported by an annual action plan which identifies what the Council will do and how the success of the strategy will be measured which will allow continuous improvements to be made to the resident engagement approach of the Council.

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Area for consideration	Comment
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Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Via ELT
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Via ELT
Existing Council Policies:	
Financial Implications (including VAT and tax):	Covered within the current designated budget
Legal Implications (including human rights):	No legal implications associated with the report.
Risk Implications:	None
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	None
Crime & Disorder:	None
Every Child Matters:	None

Resident Engagement Strategy Action Plan – update and progress September 2021

Objective 1: Increase the number of conversations with Residents			
What are we going to do?	How we are going to do it?	Timescale	Progress / RAG rating
Promote resident engagement opportunities to increase the numbers engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a variety of promotional campaigns to increase engagement across all contact 	Mar 22	In progress New notice board posters completed Promote engagement through current surveys
Demonstrate how we are listening and what actions we take	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a 'you said we did' initiative to demonstrate how we listen and act. These include timely ways to promote service improvements because of receiving complaints and suggestions/ideas Include actions within newsletters, website, social media, internal and wider tenant communications 	Oct 22	In progress Individual activity feedback regularly provided
Increase and make effective use of resident feedback to improve service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with teams to find out what the hot topic of the month is and what officers are hearing on a daily basis from tenants Carry out targeted surveys Ensure that feedback from customers is used to inform business planning and developing our strategies Have clear mechanisms in place to feedback the impact of involvement to all residents Develop approaches to encourage maximum responses for key consultations 	Ongoing	Commencing sheltered housing review consultations Completed service specific surveys on the garden maintenance scheme.
Make sure sharing views and contributing to discussions is easily accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold regular community conversations 'Let's Talk' sessions focusing on local issues and service wide improvements Focus on rural communities - to understand how responsive the Housing Service is to those who live in rural towns and villages throughout the Borough Continue to support Community Representatives and encourage more to come forward Identify themes of the month through informal contact 	Ongoing	In progress Initial local let's talk held in March 2020 further events to be scheduled from November 2021. Resources and information developed for Community Representatives

Make better use of technology and social media - develop digital tools to give as many residents as possible the chance to share and express views to contribute to improving services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and trial different options to increase engagement • Identify the best software to use that results in easy access for residents • Develop further the use of social media to publicise Resident Engagement work and advertise opportunities to get involved • Increase website visits 	Ongoing	Surveys available via MS forms, the Love Clean Streets App and Facebook page for resident engagement.
Work with councillors and local parish councils to increase exposure and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide regular updates on key activities through existing channels • Utilise local communication channels to promote engagement • Incorporate keys issues raised through councillors within the 'hot topics' feedback (ad hoc themes from informal discussions with residents) as part of wider insight 	Mar 22	Not started

Objective 2: Expand opportunities - Develop more ways for residents to be involved and share their views including through the use of technology			
What are we going to do?	How we are going to do it?	Timescale	Progress / RAG rating
Increase the tools and widen communication to support engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore different tools to support engagement • Create recognisable templates and promotional materials • Support and develop residents to be effectively engaged to include the provision of training if required (to ensure that participants have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enable them to fully participate) • Improve ways of communicating with residents 	Oct 22	Set up dedicated resident engagement email address Engagement welcome pack created Launched regular e-zine
Develop a clear approach to ensure continuous recruitment of residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the different methods for residents to involved formally and informally and the benefits • Continually review how accessible it is for residents to share their voice and be involved • Consider incentives 	Oct 22	In progress – currently linked to existing wider consultations and transactional surveys in addition to team support

Support residents to be engaged proactively where they live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a survey to measure the effectiveness of estate services and improvements • Introduce a process for tenants to monitor grounds maintenance and communal cleaning • Review the role of Community Representatives and continue to promote and expand so increase local voices • Enable and support residents to develop local involvement opportunities to meet local community needs 	Mar 22	On target Estate monitor activity launched Estate caretaking survey in development Continue to support residents with small community grant applications
Expand engagement to support residents to be involved strategically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a task and finish process to support resident-led scrutiny of key operational issues with residents • Programme in a main annual conference and progress sessions as required • Include opportunities to assess value for money and efficiency • Developing resident involvement in monitoring and improving performance to increase accountability and opportunities to challenge 	Oct 22	In progress Initial templates and approach developed for task and finish and performance accountability
Extending our reach to encourage involvement across diverse groups through making engagement more accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify gaps in views to understand and respond to the diverse needs of residents (collect and analyse diversity data of involved residents) • Consider developing special interest groups (e.g. disability, young voices, leaseholders) where there is a clear demand and need or gap in views • Develop and offer diversity training 	Oct 22	In progress Initial profiling of actively involved residents completed annually Consultation held with residents on the type of training that could be offered

Objective 3: Develop and use resident insight, so services are shaped by the feedback from residents' experience of services and their needs			
What are we going to do?	How we are going to do it?	Timescale	Progress / RAG rating
Increase the use of transactional and targeted surveys to understand the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver more surveys at the point of service delivery • Increase insight using one-off surveys to support service reviews • Analyse and share trends to support service improvement 	Ongoing	Four transactional surveys launched. Continuing to identify and assess the need for other

impact and perception of our services and identify improvements			services. Using the feedback from surveys to support service delivery.
Develop a voice of the resident report to build a picture of what residents feel about our services and support Resident Engagement focus areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a report that raises the profile of the resident voice and supports better decisions and understanding of key issues. Report to include key information from satisfaction, feedback, complaints & performance information 	Mar 22	<p>Template completed</p> <p>Information to be shared quarterly with Housing Director, Tenancy Team Managers and through six-monthly compliance report</p>

Objective 4: Embed the engagement approach to support service improvement and provide clear accountability			
What are we going to do?	How we are going to do it?	Timescale	Progress / RAG rating
Provide accessible information to support residents to be involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular communication about benefits and opportunities Regular promotion of the three strands of engagement internally and with residents Provide accessible information about engagement online (residents can see what they can do and easily join) Develop an approach to make sure residents can hold GYBC accountable against service standards (performance) 	Ongoing	<p>In progress</p> <p>Improved information on the website</p>
Embed engagement at all levels across the department with appropriate support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure staff have relevant knowledge and understanding of the structure and arrangements for tenant and leaseholder involvement through creating resources/tools for teams to effectively engage Regular attendance by staff at meetings of established groups Ensuring there is agreement regarding the actions to be taken and feedback to tenant and leaseholder on the outcomes of engagement 	Mar 23	<p>Induction chats scheduled for new starters</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop tailored induction chats 		
Have a clear approach to recording the impact of engagement activities capturing service improvements (evidence the success of engagement and use this to continually review in collaboration with residents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an approach of recording resident influence (suggestions, recommendations, improvements) Use the existing House Mark definition to demonstrate impact of engagement 	Ongoing	<p>Spreadsheet developed and in use to capture impact of engagement</p> <p>Impact to be reported annually to residents</p>
Hold regular borough wide conversations (support collaboration and recognise the efforts of engaged residents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme in a main annual conference and annual update/progress sessions as required 	Oct 22	Not yet started

Monitoring

An annual report will be provided to members summarising the impact of resident engagement activities and measuring how successful resident engagement activities have been.



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RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



FOREWORD

Welcome to the Resident Engagement Strategy. I am delighted to introduce the Council's Resident Engagement Strategy. The Council is committed to listening and involving tenants and leaseholders in the management of their homes.

This strategy outlines the Council's commitment to the residents on the Council's estates and in Council homes that their voice will be heard. The strategy strengthens the approach to engagement. The strategy will drive forward plans to embed the resident voice in everything we do, provide opportunities for real influence and positive change.

The Council recognises that genuine and flexible engagement is the driver to successfully delivering services that tenants and leaseholders want. I look forward to working in partnership with residents to improve the housing services the Council provides and to create an environment where working together we can all make a positive difference to our tenants, homes and communities.

Cllr Andy Grant, Chair of Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

INTRODUCTION

This strategy has been developed with residents and considers the changing regulatory environment for the Council's Housing Service.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council (GYBC) has a long history of working closely with its residents to support decisions. Resident engagement has recently been centred around local neighbourhoods and Community Representatives. This has created a solid foundation of working with residents at a local level supporting estate management and localised improvements.

GYBC Housing Services provides a range of housing services for over 10,000 people across the borough.

2020 saw the publication of the Charter for Social Housing. It is explicit in its aims to increase the tenant voice, make sure homes are safe, make sure landlords are accountable, strengthen the consumer regulation of housing services, ensuring complaints processes are fair, increasing respect

and delivering good quality homes and neighbourhoods. In line with the Charter, the Resident Engagement Strategy is clear that the Council must make sure it can support all residents to have their say.



WHAT WE MEAN BY RESIDENT

ENGAGEMENT

Resident Engagement is a vital to understanding how services are received and supports the Council to improve the Housing Service it delivers. As a landlord, the Council has a responsibility to make sure everyone's voice can be heard and support a range of ways this can happen.

Resident is used throughout this strategy to refer to the tenants, leaseholders and other residents who live on the Council's estates and in Council owned homes. This strategy sets out the Council's approach to resident engagement in this wider sense. In some cases, however, the Council will carry out consultations which are for tenants and / or leaseholders only, where there is a need to do so, to meet legal requirements upon the Council.

In summary, resident engagement is:

- An opportunity to find out what residents want and need (expect and aspire to).
- A way that supports any resident to hold the Council to account and importantly influence and change how services are provided.

By working together, we can achieve more by:

- Creating the right environment that is open and supportive that leads to genuine partnership
- Having a clear approach where engagement activities lead to service improvements and positive solutions
- Improving resident focus and increasing satisfaction
- Using resident insight to provide better services, improve the design of services and achieve greater value for money
- Providing services that reflect tenants needs
- Supporting more sustainable and vibrant communities
- Improving relationships between landlord and tenant with more awareness of everyone's position.

VISION

The Council's vision for resident engagement is to deliver a great housing service through residents feeling listened to, able to influence decisions, hold us to account and work in partnership to make positive changes.

Resident engagement enables us to reflect and understand what we are doing and helps us develop more effective and efficient services.



OBJECTIVES OF THE RESIDENT

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The benefits of resident engagement are clear in supporting good customer service and delivering efficient services.

To help the Council achieve its vision for resident Engagement, this Strategy identifies two key objectives to support the Council to deliver excellent engagement and involvement:

- To hear everyone's voice and work together with residents to make a difference through delivering excellent involvement/engagement.
- Residents have clear opportunities to stay informed, be consulted with and take part in decision making.

To achieve these objectives and the vision for resident engagement, the Council will:

- Increase the number of conversations with residents

- Develop more ways for residents to be involved and share their views including through the use of technology
- Develop and use resident insight, so services are shaped by the feedback from resident's experience of services and their needs
- Embed the engagement approach to support service improvement and provide clear accountability



HOW DO WE PLAN TO DELIVER A STRONGER VOICE?



1. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CONVERSATIONS WITH RESIDENTS

Many residents don't get involved due to time constraints or the belief the Council does not listen. It is important to make it easy for all residents to be involved when they can as well as showing the difference that has been made in the way things are done through 'you said we did'.

2. EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES

Everyone has a busy life, but everyone has a voice. Using technology better will support residents to share their voice more easily. The use of different approaches and software will be explored to increase engagement. It is easier to be involved where you live, therefore new ways have been developed so all residents can make a difference to their local area.

3. DEVELOP AND USE INSIGHT

Develop our approach to using the information and feedback received from residents so it can tailor and improve services. Information will be made more available to support resident engagement. To deliver better services it is important to know and understand residents' aspirations and needs.

4. EMBED THE ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The resident voice needs to be strong and productive so everyone can work towards delivering the best services. The new engagement structure will be continually developed and embedded across the service to be effective and transparent. It will have clear routes for accountability and clearly show the impact of resident engagement. This will be owned by everyone, residents and staff.

WAYS TO HAVE YOUR SAY

The Council's Resident Engagement supports residents to be engaged in the way they want across one or more of the following workstreams:



There is a clear and simple structure to support and encourage residents to be involved in a way that suits them. All residents will have an opportunity to have their say across a variety of different activities dependent upon their level and choice of involvement.

Demonstrating that we listen and deliver

The Council will clearly show the difference involvement and engagement makes, how it leads to value for money and better services. The Council will evidence the positive change and communicate this to everyone through our News and Views magazine, on our website and social media channels.

Making it easy to have your say

The Council will support anyone who wants to be involved through covering reasonable out of pocket expenses and support you with training and attending events. The Council will make sure residents have access to the right information and support from the right staff members to make the most of every resident engagement opportunity.

Your Area

Your Voice

Your Services

Community Reps
- work with us where you live to help improve your neighbourhood and services you receive

Local Let's Talk - get together with others to talk about the service you receive

Estate Monitors
- help us to maintain spaces you are proud of through independently assessing against the Council's standards

Online Survey Panel - an online panel to share your views and support consultations

Share ideas & suggestions to improve the services you receive

Reviewing and supporting us to communicate better

Specialist interest groups and projects - sign up to be involved in one off panels, meetings or projects addressing the things that matter most to you

Task & Finish - take an in-depth look at a specific area and make recommendations for improvement

Performance Review Group - hold the Council to account on performance



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