

## Resident Engagement Review

*The evolving nature of the housing sector highlights the need to stay at the forefront of societal change; this Review aims to ensure our procedures embrace change and increase participation within existing resources and in a sustainable way. The Review is split into 6 key themed headings, each of which provides a description of the current approach and analyses whether they will continue to be supported, or whether they could be altered to increase their effectiveness. A number of new initiatives have been created as a direct response to resident demands.*

### Introduction

In March 2017 HSC approved a Resident Involvement Strategy 2017-2021. Whilst this continues to outline the objectives of the service, there is a need to consider the engagement activities in more detail to ensure that the opportunities for involvement on offer allow participation from a broader cross section of residents. The evolving nature of the housing sector highlights the need to stay at the forefront of societal change. Since the Grenfell tragedy in 2017 and the resulting Green Paper, there has been a heightened focus on the importance of resident engagement and scrutiny of service.

After securing £70 million of devolution funding Cambridge City Council is delivering a comprehensive building programme designed to expand the city and cater for its residents. With so much new council housing being built this is a key opportunity to review our resident engagement procedures to ensure they embrace change and include as many residents as possible in a sustainable way.

The Resident Engagement team, which comprises of 1 full time and 1 part time member of staff, facilitates a variety of methods to engage with City Council tenants and leaseholders. The various methods form concentric circles of involvement with six elected Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives (TLRs) forming the core circle. The other forms of engagement feed into the TLRs and allows them to represent the views of residents on the Housing Scrutiny Committee. The housing service values the time and dedication that residents contribute to the various resident engagement activities. Their input facilitates a grass-roots response and enriches the quality of the service provided.

This review is split into 6 key headings, which are listed below. Each heading covers a description of current methods of engagement and analyses whether they will continue or how they could be improved to increase resident involvement and

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<sup>1</sup>Resident Involvement Strategy 2017-2020 <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/5624/resident-involvement-strategy-2017.pdf>

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engagement. Fundamental to each of the proposals is for residents to feel empowered to take part and input to a service which delivers for them.

- Development and Accountability
- Digital
- Surveys
- Community Improvement
- Wider Engagement
- Communication

The improvements proposed under these 6 headings are not exhaustive and the approach to delivery will remain flexible in order to ensure the initiatives evolve through time to suit residents' needs and demands. The TLRs input has been instrumental to evidencing the review and they have expressed support for the recommendations. The wider methodologies used have been to:

- Measure the objective effectiveness and value for money of existing services
- Consider feedback from residents on existing services and on other services that they are requesting
- Research other providers' services, to compare for positive practice
- Consider all the above in the light of specific developments in social housing in Cambridge, and the Council's future strategic needs.

Networking and having an awareness of best practice from other housing providers is an ongoing requirement to ensure quality and efficiency in service delivery. In order to analyse different approaches to resident involvement research has been undertaken into other Local Authorities across the country such as Colchester, Nottingham, Brighton, Oxford and Islington. Examples of effective engagement are dotted throughout the Review and serve as a guide to how we can improve our approach. The Review also aligns with the wider service objectives which help determine priorities for consultation moving forward. These are:

- Place
- Income maximisation
- Looking after our most vulnerable residents
- Ensuring quality and efficiency in service delivery

### **Development and Accountability**

Our key aim is to facilitate empowerment by making sure tenants and leaseholders have an influencing role that is proactive, inclusive and leads to positive service improvements.

The current scrutiny arrangements involve five tenants and one leaseholder being elected by City Council residents to represent their views on the Housing Scrutiny Committee (HSC). Elections take place every 4 years and are independently conducted by the Electoral Reform Society. As Members of HSC, TLRs vote on all decisions relating to the landlord function of the Council which encompass policy, strategy and service-delivery. Having residents sitting on the Council's main housing committee is a unique approach to scrutiny facilitating insight which allows the Council to tailor and target services. Their involvement ensures accurate feedback and challenge from service-users', connecting decision-makers with the grassroots communities they serve.

Our research into other housing providers' approaches to scrutiny highlights the variety in arrangements. Cambridge City Council takes a relatively unique approach by pre-scrutinising decisions before they have formally been made. Having elected TLR's sitting on HSC allows them to scrutinise decisions at the same time as councillors. Although TLR's cannot vote on housing matters that do not relate to the Housing Revenue Account, their position on the HSC does allow them the opportunity to get an insight and verbally scrutinise the wider housing decisions during committee.

Analysis of the current arrangements highlights how the TLR position on the HSC facilitates a level of scrutiny and accountability, however it only operates at the sign-off stage of a decision rather than during its development. In order to create the opportunity for more meaningful resident contribution this Review seeks to strengthen the existing scrutiny processes by increasing their scope for input.

**Proposal 1:** To facilitate input and greater consultation, officers will be encouraged to consult with residents in the infant stages of many of the decisions/reports/policies which relate to tenants and leaseholders.

**Impact of Proposal 1-** At present the draft HSC agenda containing the Forward Plan items are circulated to relevant officers for administrative purposes long in advance of report deadlines, this could also be sent to TLRs so that they can personally identify reports of interest. Instilling this approach will ensure that resident consultation will become a normal and fundamental part of business practice for officers. It will also enable residents to feed into the decision making process at a stage where they can achieve meaningful input, rather than just at sign off. Contributing at all stages of the process facilitates effective 'journey mapping'<sup>2</sup> and ensures resident interests are at the heart of service delivery allowing them to feel an element of ownership over the topic at hand.

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<sup>2</sup> *Tpas Journey Mapping with our Customers* <https://www.tpas.org.uk/blog/journey-mapping-with-our-customers>

To facilitate an increased level of resident input there needs to be a wider bank of residents available to be called upon. Brighton City Council<sup>3</sup> and Colchester Borough Council<sup>4</sup> have successfully implemented resident panels which are advisory in nature, giving Panel members an opportunity to examine issues which affect how their services are accessed and delivered. The Panel is chaired by a resident member of their Decision Making Board and as such the outcome of panel discussion is fed by the Chair directly back into the Board.

**Proposal 2:** To strengthen existing scrutiny processes, the creation of a residents' Panel would facilitate a greater level of input from a wider and more representative demographic of residents.

**Impact of Proposal 2:** The Panel would meet bi-monthly and be chaired by a TLR. The Panel size would not be limited so interested residents who are prepared to invest a minimum amount of time could all take part. In order to appeal to a greater number of residents, attendance would not be required at every meeting and members could also take part digitally if desired. The terms of reference would be developed in consultation with TLRs in order to establish the responsibility of the panel, which items would be heard and how the information that it produces is used. Once established the panel would be flexibly consulted as a cross- service sounding board on a plethora of topics which impact residents; their response would then be fed back to TLRs by the Chair. Once the governance arrangements are agreed the purpose and remit can be communicated with officers to ensure the panel is utilised effectively. This approach facilitates a greater level of input from a wider and more representative demographic of residents.

Meanwhile, the City Council's Housing Development Agency (HDA) has a large programme to deliver private and social housing across the city over the next few years. Many of the proposals will see the creation of whole new estates. Being on the cusp of such large scale projects provides an opportunity for residents to contribute to the design and development of the new communities. TLR's already receive quarterly updates from HDA representatives who meet to outline the progress on existing and prospective developments.

**Proposal 3:** Will implement an additional element to the HDA update meetings by dedicating a proportion of time to specific developments which are at their design stage, allowing time to review the plans, materials and layout of the proposals in detail. The HDA representative will take the feedback and contribute it to the ongoing development discussion.

<sup>3</sup> *Area Panels - Housing Management* <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/council-housing/area-panels-housing-management>

<sup>4</sup> *CBH Residents Panel* <http://www.cbhomes.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=24156&p=0>

**Impact of Proposal 3:** This involvement allows residents an opportunity to use their experience of living on estates and in council owned properties to highlight residents' priorities. Their input can also contribute to reviewing the HDA's Employment Standard Specification Requirements. This document sets the required standard for all future HDA housing developments.

## Digital

The digital world is ever expanding and more core services are now transferring to online systems to reduce cost and increase efficiency. There is a danger for those who cannot access digital facilities to get left behind during this switch. Facilitating digital inclusion is a fundamental aspect of resident involvement and aligns with the wider Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and Digital Transformation Strategy. This Review aims to ensure we are connecting citizens and providing digital customer service where it will be needed in the future.

Over the last few years the Resident Engagement service has trialled a number of digital inclusion projects to identify which approach is the most successful. Examples include:

- Holding drop-in computer sessions in areas of high need to teach residents core usability skills
- Providing free 12 week training courses
- Loaning digital equipment
- Giving residents the opportunity to buy loaned equipment at a reduced rate
- Training residents as Digital Champions in sheltered schemes

The latter is an ongoing programme delivered in sheltered schemes which targets older people and involves training residents to become Digital Champions so they can help teach other residents who need assistance in a sustainable way.

We are committed to continuing to develop and deliver digital initiatives which respond to the challenges experienced by tenants and leaseholders imposed through other societal factors such as welfare reform. Analysis of the past projects has highlighted that in order to secure attendance and be effective projects need to be delivered directly within the community they serve, convenience and flexibility are crucial.

Feedback from residents and digital partners across the city<sup>5</sup> confirms that for many residents their main equipment for accessing the internet is through a smartphone or handheld device. We have used this information to propose the following improvement:

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<sup>5</sup> *Digital Partnership Meeting*-Chaired by Cambridge City Council's Digital Inclusion Projects Officer

**Proposal 4:** Explore the development of alternative digital classes which teach learners how to use their own devices to a greater capacity, for example to make and monitor a Universal Credit application using their smart phone.

**Impact of Proposal 4:** This approach enables residents to increase their digital capacity by using a device that they already own.

The cost of an internet connection and an on-going contract can be a barrier for many residents on low incomes. The Housing Service wants to facilitate increased connectivity inside people's homes and in community facilities where it can be used for free. Increasing competition between providers is widely regarded as a way to drive down price.

**Proposal 5:** The housing service is committed to facilitating increased connectivity by working with providers to allow them access to install fibre optic broadband capability into residential housing estates and community facilities owned by Cambridge City Council.

**Impact of Proposal 5:** A number of companies have approached the Housing Service to request access to install their fibre infrastructure into estates, the Council will do all it can to support companies to do this and help create a competitive marketplace. The Head of Housing has decided to begin this process by granting access to a company who will install the infrastructure to all properties and community rooms for free. Residents can choose to take up a connection package thereafter. The company has developed a reduced price package specifically designed for Cambridge City Council tenants which has options for a short term rolling contract. As part of the agreement the ongoing community room connection will be free of charge to the City Council ensuring a free facility for residents' use. The ongoing programme of delivery will be managed by the Resident Engagement Officer to ensure minimal disruption to residents.

In order to make the best use of council resources, plans are in place to recycle some of the digital equipment which is being upgraded as part of the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy. The roll out of the strategy means that a lot of equipment for officers is being upgraded which leaves the old hardware redundant.

**Proposal 6:** Taking a one-council approach, a plan is in place to recycle some of the equipment, install appropriate software and then house it in the City Homes community rooms for public use.

**Impact of Proposal 6:** Once internet access is established in community rooms and equipment is available for public use, free digital sessions will be held for residents to learn skills and gain a standard of understanding. This can help reduce social isolation, improve employability and digital independence. The classes will be developed in conjunction with the Digital Inclusion Projects Officer who delivers the digital elements of the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Research into other housing providers has shown that many have created online digital platforms to gather resident input and satisfaction. Stonewater Housing have created an online Customer Hub<sup>6</sup> which encourages residents to get involved and help shape services by providing a central area for residents to leave feedback about services, reply to consultations/surveys, read others' feedback and discuss ideas about improvements.

**Proposal 7:** Building a similar resident-focussed digital platform will be explored in detail, with a view to connecting residents so they can contribute to housing matters from the comfort of their own home.

**Impact of Proposal 7:** A digital platform will increase accessibility for residents to take part in discussion without having to be available to attend activities in person.

## Surveys

Legislation requires all registered housing providers to consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving them in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service<sup>7</sup>. To date, a Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) survey has been the main source of wide-scale data gathering for the City Council's Housing Service. STAR Surveys were sent to all tenants and leaseholders every 4 years to measure satisfaction; the results were also used to identify priorities in the following years. The last survey was undertaken in 2014 however, the response rate from tenants was only 26%. Although this approach gathers resident opinion, the low response rate means that the results are

<sup>6</sup> Stonewater Customer Hubb <https://thehubb.stonewater.org/>

<sup>7</sup> Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard- Homes and Communities Agency. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/725831/Tenant\\_Involvement\\_and\\_Empowerment\\_Standard.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/725831/Tenant_Involvement_and_Empowerment_Standard.pdf)

given a voice. To ensure as many residents as possible have an opportunity to feedback this Review proposes to utilise various avenues of communication which appeals to a broader spectrum of preferences; encompassing digital, paper, telephone and face-to-face. Employing a third party company to undertake telephone interviews was considered as a new approach to data gathering but TLRs felt that the response rate would be low because of scepticism from residents about divulging information over the phone. They felt other survey methods should be explored first.

**Proposal 8:** Cambridge is a relatively small city but its various areas have differing needs. To tailor our service to meet these needs localised surveys and consultations will be employed to increase our understanding of what residents want. The scope for participation in postal surveys will be held in conjunction with wider activities such as resident walkabouts, estate improvements, and policy consultations.

**Impact for Proposal 8:** The purpose of taking a more direct approach is to ensure we are asking the right people about issues in the areas which impact them directly<sup>8</sup>. Combining different methods of communication allows us to feedback to residents about issues they have raised and to manage their expectations in terms of what is and is not achievable. In each questionnaire residents will be asked to comment on their local area however there will also be a standard set of wider services related questions to build a broader picture of opinion.

With a large housing development programme underway resident feedback will be crucial to understanding levels of satisfaction within the new communities.

**Proposal 9:** To embed engagement from an early stage the Housing Development Agency will provide information on developments which are newly completed and house new tenants. After the first six months residents will receive a survey which asks questions relating to their experience and if there are any issues with the property?

**Impact for Proposal 9:** This aims to increase our understanding of their experiences enabling the Council to learn and develop its approach. It also builds a line of communication between new residents and their service provider.

## Community Improvement

A key priority for the housing service is to ensure our estates are safe, clean and enjoyable places to live. If residents are going to contribute to ensuring this is maintained they too need to feel a sense of pride, wanting to make valuable changes

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<sup>8</sup>National Principles for Public Engagement, Participation Cymru  
<https://participation.cymru/en/principles/>

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to their community. The Review highlighted the benefits that City Council services gain from residents' input and the empowering impact this contribution also has for residents.

A tenant and leaseholder Garden Competition is held every summer with a prize giving ceremony for all participants later in the year. There are a number of different entry categories which enables residents with any type or size of garden, balcony or green space to take part. The competition promotes inclusivity, it is very popular and involves a significant proportion of disabled or vulnerable residents. It is straightforward to administer and will continue to be supported by the Resident Engagement service.

Resident Inspectors and wider resident feedback has highlighted the support for two existing initiatives: Estate Walkabouts and Resident and Officers Asset Management (ROAM)/Void meetings. Resident enthusiasm is displayed through a direct request for both programmes to remain on the future resident involvement agenda and to seek information on how their activities can expand going forward.

Throughout 2018 estate walkabouts were conducted across the city. Residents had the opportunity to join and walk around their estates with council officers and ward councillors to identify issues. The approach has been really successful and empowered residents to directly influence council priorities in their areas. In order to reach more residents additional support will be provided by the Resident Engagement Officer to formalise the organisation, advertise the sessions and publicise the findings more widely.

**Proposal 10:** The review will support a continued programme of bi-monthly walkabouts which alternates between north and south city estates. The arrangements will be formalised to allow more residents to take part.

**Impact for Proposal 10:** Formalising the arrangements and advertising the meetings more widely to local residents and providing contact details for those who cannot attend but would like to input via email or telephone. Each officer in attendance will take away their own actions and will have ownership over their delivery.

Until recently Resident and Officers Asset Management (ROAM) meetings brought together residents and council officers. The group was resident-led and designed to inform/influence the City Council's planned works programme. The meeting was followed by a Voids meeting which provided updates on void properties across the city. Changes to some council services meant that these meetings were put on hold.

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However Resident Inspectors have highlighted the benefit of the meetings and have made specific requests for them to be re-established.

**Proposal 11:** Re-establish ROAM/Void meetings, and transfer their management from the Maintenance and Assets Team to the Resident Engagement service.

**Impact for Proposal 11:** Formalising the arrangements and advertising the meetings more widely will ensure greater participation.

In order to make wider improvements to assets and communal areas on estates, funding has been secured from the budget for a five year Estates Improvement Scheme. The new fund releases £1 million each year for 5 years which will be ring fenced to ensure it is spent solely on capital improvements, rather than on work categorised as planned maintenance. The improvement proposals were submitted by Estate Champions and have arisen directly from resident and ward councillor input through estate walkabouts undertaken during 2018. The walkabouts allowed residents the opportunity to identify first-hand the areas on their estates which they thought could benefit from investment. Input from the Council's Estate and Common Parts Surveys also evidenced the need to invest in certain areas.

**Proposal 12:** The Review supports the Estate Improvement Scheme by encouraging residents to submit new proposals for consideration and to undertake the consultation on accepted proposals.

**Impact for Proposal 12:** Once a proposal is identified residents and ward councillors in the area will play a crucial role in helping to design and implement the proposed changes to ensure they are involved at every stage. Going forward, residents will also be encouraged to make suggestions for future proposals spanning the 5 year programme. An ongoing advertisement asking for resident suggestions for estate walkabout locations, Estate Improvement Scheme recommendations and ROAM/Void meetings will be included in each edition of Open Door. The advert will also encourage residents to write in and express what is important on their estate and where improvements could be made.

Volunteers play a crucial role in inspecting internal and external parts of estates to ensure the maintenance undertaken by both the City Council and external contractors meets agreed service standards. Resident Inspectors and Green Inspectors monitor the internal and external condition of council homes and estates

to ensure contractors are accountable and delivery meets agreed standards. The numbers of Resident Inspectors needs to increase to ensure greater accountability.

**Proposal 13:** Undertake recruitment drives on specific estates, allowing new Inspectors to inspect their immediate area rather than having to travel city-wide.

**Impact for Proposal 13:** The Review has highlighted the need to make it easier for residents to take part so flexibly reducing the capacity of the role by allowing them to inspect their local area might make it easier to take part and more appealing. Supporting inspectors to report back digitally or by phone rather than having to attend formal meetings will also facilitate this.

## Wider Engagement

One of the five principles underpinning the Social Housing Green Paper (2018)<sup>9</sup> is empowering residents and ensuring their voices are heard so that landlords are held to account. Engagement and facilitating the ability for a wider demographic to participate is a key priority to ensure we are meeting the needs of different types of residents. A variety of methods also need to be available to appeal to the preferences of residents; feedback tells us that some want to get heavily involved whilst others like to casually input into activities in their direct vicinity.

At present the Resident Engagement service assists some community groups by facilitating meetings and providing a venue. Guidance and administrative assistance is also provided to those who would like to create an official Residents Association (RA). RAs can apply for a grant from the Council of up to £1000 to spend on community activity. Historically RAs have been a popular way for residents to get involved in their community. Guidance is provided by the Resident Engagement service about how to apply for funding. Although some areas across the city still have thriving RAs their general popularity has dwindled because residents do not want the responsibility of their core formalities. Resident feedback has highlighted a preference to attend more informal ad hoc pop-up community meetings, which often occur in response to a localised issue and then disperse once it's fixed. The Resident Engagement team has also received numerous requests for funding from these pop-up groups, which to date cannot be granted because they do not have a formal bank account which is required within the RA structure.

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<sup>9</sup> Social Housing Green Paper (2018) <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-new-deal-for-social-housing>

**Proposal 14:** In order to facilitate wider access to the grant fund the Review proposes to maintain the current RA grant system but also allow pop-up groups to apply for a grant out of the same fund. The pop-up group would be required to apply for funding (satisfying set criteria) for a specific change which can be enjoyed by the whole community. Once granted the money would stay in the Resident Engagement budget but would be ring fenced with a dedicated cost code. Once identified the items would be purchased directly by officers so the financial transaction could still be audited.

**Impact for Proposal 14:** This adjusted, flexible approach would open more opportunity for residents to make changes to their environment.

The Sheltered Schemes Resident Association (SSRA) is an example of one RA which ceased in recent years because residents no longer wanted to take on the responsibility of the formal aspects of the group. In order to reinvigorate a sense of community within the 13 sheltered schemes, the Review proposes to:

**Proposal 15:** Create a sheltered scheme community group which meets quarterly. The location will move between the schemes and will be facilitated by the Resident Engagement Officer and sheltered housing staff.

**Impact for Proposal 15:** All sheltered housing residents will be welcome to attend. At the meeting they will receive service updates from the Housing Services Manager and have the opportunity to request items for discussion or topics of interest.

In December 2018 a recruitment drive was undertaken to fill two vacant Tenant Representative positions on the Housing Scrutiny Committee. All tenants were individually written to and invited to apply. The response rate was over four times higher than through previous methods of advertising the position, so this has informed the future approach for recruitment and publicising TLR elections. In order to ensure we captured the enthusiasm of the candidates who were not selected for the positions, all suitable candidates were offered a place on the newly proposed Residents Panel. Going forward, after a TLR election the same approach will be taken if there is a surplus of unsuccessful candidates so that their enthusiasm and expertise isn't lost.

## Communication

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A crucial aspect of effective resident involvement is ensuring outcomes are fed back to them so they remain involved in the ongoing process and can see how their contribution has made a difference.

One of the key methods of communication between the housing service and tenants and leaseholders is through Open Door; a 16 page publication which is posted and emailed to residents three times a year. Open Door's content is aligned systematically to help deliver the objectives of the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy. Its main streams of information relate to; policy changes/ council updates, help and support within the community and updates on resident involvement activities. The magazine is designed and produced in-house and its content is sourced directly from officers across the council and partner agencies. The Open Door Residents' Panel edit the content and ensures it responds to current demands. Resident feedback highlights the value that they place on Open Door. This is evidenced by a recent request to revert back to producing a fourth edition (which was reduced during the Housing Transformation). This request will be fully considered during 2019/20 and responded to accordingly.

**Proposal 16:** The production of Open Door will continue but as part of the review its design has undergone a revamp. The size of the publication remains the same but the colour, layout, material and images have been modernised.

**Impact for Proposal 16:** Reviewing the design freshens up the look of the publication, it standardises the layout and makes it easier to read.

Working closely with the City Council's Corporate Marketing Team ensures we take a one council approach to the messages being conveyed in publications. The resident engagement webpage will be reviewed and updated to ensure it only contains information that is relevant and up to date.

**Proposal 17:** New elements will be added to the web page which encapsulates the new or changed methods of involvement outlined within this Review. Policies, procedures and strategies will also be accessible on the page for residents to self-serve where possible.

**Impact for Proposal 17:** Enabling residents to access information digitally increases accessibility and transparency of information.

Brighton City Council<sup>10</sup> takes a dynamic approach to service updates by compiling its annual report into a short graphics based video which is easy to follow, fun to watch and grasps a different kind of audience.

**Proposal 18:** The Resident Engagement team will explore the opportunity to digitalise information such as our annual report and other key messages into a video format which can be shared on social media.

Impact for Proposal 18: Videos are easy to share on social media so can have a wider digital footprint than simply uploading information to a webpage.

## Conclusion

The eighteen proposals considered within this Review are summarised below. They are all considered to be deliverable within current resources and a timeline for initiating the activities will be created to ensure effective monitoring. We believe the proposals build on previous successes while planning for meeting emerging needs. Fundamental to each of them is for residents to feel empowered to take part and input into a service which delivers for them. The recommendations are not exhaustive and the approach to delivery will remain flexible in order to ensure the initiatives evolve through time to suit resident's needs and demands. The recommendations also align with the wider service objectives which will help determine priorities for consultation moving forward.

## Summary of Proposals:

### Development & Accountability

**Proposal 1:** To facilitate input and greater consultation, officers will be encouraged to consult with residents in the infant stages of many of the decisions/reports/policies which relate to tenants and leaseholders.

**Proposal 2:** To strengthen existing scrutiny processes the creation of a Residents' Panel would facilitate a greater level of input from a wider and more representative demographic of residents.

**Proposal 3:** To implement an additional element to the HDA update meetings by dedicating a proportion of time to specific developments which are at their design stage, allowing time to review the plans, materials and layout of the proposals in detail. The HDA representative will take the feedback and contribute it to the ongoing development discussion.

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<sup>10</sup> Brighton City Council Annual Report <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/council-housing/annual-report-council-tenants-and-leaseholders>

## Digital

**Proposal 4:** Explore the development of alternative digital classes which teach learners how to use their own devices to a greater capacity, for example to make and monitor a Universal Credit application using their smart phone.

**Proposal 5:** The Housing Service is committed to facilitating increased connectivity by working with providers to allow them access to install fibre optic broadband capability into residential housing estates and community facilities owned by Cambridge City Council.

**Proposal 6:** Taking a one-council approach, a plan is in place to recycle some of the equipment, install appropriate software and then house it in the City Homes community rooms for public use.

**Proposal 7:** Building a similar resident-focussed digital platform will be explored in detail, with a view to connect residents so they can contribute to housing matters from the comfort of their own home.

## Surveys

**Proposal 8:** In order to tailor our service to meet residents' needs localised surveys and consultations will be employed to increase our understanding of what residents want. The scope for participation in postal surveys will be held in conjunction with wider activities such as resident walkabouts, estate improvements, and policy consultations.

**Proposal 9:** In order to embed engagement from an early stage the Housing Development Agency will provide information on developments which are newly completed and contain tenants. After the first six months residents will receive a survey which asks questions relating to their experience and if there are any issues with the property.

## Community Improvement

**Proposal 10:** The Review will support a continued programme of bi-monthly walkabouts which alternates between north and south city estates. The arrangements will be formalised to allow more residents to take part.

**Proposal 11:** Re-establish ROAM/Void meetings, transferring the management from the Maintenance and Assets Team to the Resident Engagement service.

**Proposal 12:** Supports the Estate Improvement Scheme by encouraging residents to submit new proposals for consideration and to undertake the consultation on accepted proposals.

**Proposal 13:** Undertake recruitment drives on specific estates, allowing new Inspectors to inspect their immediate area rather than having to travel city-wide.

## **Wider Engagement**

**Proposal 14:** In order to facilitate wider access to the grant fund the Review proposes to maintain the current RA grant system but also allow pop-up groups to apply for a grant out of the same fund.

**Proposal 15:** Create a sheltered scheme community group which meets quarterly, the location will move between the schemes and would be facilitated by the Resident Engagement Officer and sheltered housing staff.

## **Communication**

**Proposal 16:** The production of Open Door will continue but its design has undergone a revamp. The size of the publication remains the same but the colour, layout, material and images have been modernised to freshen up the look and make it easier to read.

**Proposal 17:** New elements will be added to the web page which encapsulates the new or changed methods of involvement outlined with this Review. Policies, procedures and strategies will also be accessible on the page for residents to self-serve where possible.

**Proposal 18:** The Resident Engagement team will explore the opportunity to digitalise information such as our annual report and other key messages into a video format which can be shared on social media.