

Item No. 7	Classification: Open	Date: 25 th January 2016	Meeting Name: Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub- Committee
Report title:		Resident Led Local Service (RELEASE)	
From:		Director of Housing and Modernisation	
Report Author		Lee Page, Resident Involvement Manager	

Recommendations

That the Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee are asked to:

- Note the progress made on the project to date
- Note the next steps proposed in the paper including the establishment of the pilot boards as sub groups of the 3 Area Housing Forums, and the first task of the sub groups is to look at how to redesign the repairs service to deliver improved satisfaction within the existing budget allocations for these areas.
- Note the forward plan proposed for the development and delivery of these subgroups.
- Note the proposed mechanism for evaluation of the projects over the first year.

Background

1. On 22 October 2013 the Cabinet report Increasing Tenant and Homeowner Participation in the Delivery of Council Housing Services tasked 'officers with exploring the options for increasing tenant and homeowner management of and involvement in council housing services'.
2. In 2014, Tenant Management Initiatives explored how to deliver this commitment and identified 3 pilot areas, Camberwell, Peckham and Walworth. Following discussion at Area Housing Forums Camberwell and Peckham indicated that they were interested in exploring the ideas further although there were reservations about what this meant.
3. On 8 December 2014, SMT agreed a series of actions to improve the quality of customer service:
 - We will change the management arrangements for the repairs service with a local neighbourhood approach, accountable to local resident boards.
 - These boards will include ward councillors and elected resident representatives and will hold the service to account in geographical areas.
 - We will set up estate management boards to give residents more control over the service we deliver in their neighbourhood
 - We will encourage resident scrutiny of service delivery
 - We will advertise the potential for residents to take on responsibility for elements of service delivery

- We will encourage younger people to get involved, and stay involved, through the use of new media

Rationale – innovation and satisfaction

4. The commitment to construct 11,000 new homes over the next thirty years to replace stock loss over that period means that Housing and Community Services has a responsibility to prove that it can deliver landlord services into the future through innovative management which improves the quality of services and the satisfaction of the users of these services.
5. Following these early discussions it was decided to aim to establish at least two pilot projects placing residents in the driving seat of local planning and delivery of their housing services by April 2016.
6. The Resident Led Local Delivery (RELEASE) project aims to demonstrate that the council can adapt its own practices and structures to successfully operate as an efficient social landlord responsive to residents' needs and aspirations.
7. The focus of RELEASE is to raise levels of resident satisfaction with housing services through improving the quality of services, but also by establishing greater customer confidence through strengthening the sense of local ownership and control. The ambition is to build a co-productive approach to the tenant and landlord relationship and deliver significant culture shift moving from adversarial to collaborative dynamics by focusing on joint problem solving.
8. The Star survey of 2013 found a net satisfaction rate for tenants to be only 44%, while for leaseholders it was –15%. The importance of how well repairs are handled in determining satisfaction was also underlined by the survey. For tenants living in directly managed stock, net satisfaction with the repairs service was 40.1%, whilst for TMO tenants the corresponding figure was 71.5%.
9. RELEASE has to emphasise flexibility and adaptability to local needs, wishes and capacity so we cannot present a proscriptive model to residents as a basis for discussion.

Areas

10. The initial discussion with AHF in 2014 identified 3 areas interested in exploring the idea further:
 - Camberwell West
 - Camberwell East
 - Peckham
11. The feedback from these discussions demonstrated a concern about cutting across current AHF boundaries and resident representatives were very clear that any governance structure would have to enable residents to exercise substantive decision-making.
12. Tenant Council expressed concern about how any new structures might cut across or undermine existing consultation structures and a joint homeowner and tenant Task and Finish Group has been established with the following agreed role:
 - To scrutinise any emerging proposals related to developing pilot schemes for resident led service delivery.
 - To provide an independent check of the impact of any proposals on existing housing consultation structures.

- To work with the council to develop a consultation strategy on the pilot projects.
- To scrutinise the impact of the pilot projects a year after implementation.

Project update

13. It is clear that unless residents are keen to work with officers in new ways RELEASE would be unable to deliver the changes anticipated. The primary consideration at this time has been to engage resident activists in the project (both at local and borough-wide level).
14. In order to test the appetite for change and how much local people would be prepared to play an active part in any new initiatives officers organised and a series of workshops in June.
15. The process of developing a proposal for one or more areas needs to involve council staff and seek to build partnership between staff and residents. Consequently, staff were also invited to attend separate workshops following the same format as residents.
16. Workshops were organised in Camberwell and Peckham with residents from these areas, Community Engagement and RSO staff, repairs and call centre staff working in the proposed pilot neighbourhoods and there was a short session at the Community Engagement away day.
17. Participants were asked what they valued, what were the issues, to map a user journey, offer solutions to this problem, to identify the benefits of local delivery and greater resident involvement, prioritise services for local delivery, identify roles for residents, and suggest who else might be involved and what would make a good area for a pilot project.
18. The outcomes of the workshops demonstrated considerable similarities between staff and residents and across the two areas. The key conclusions are
 - There is an appetite for the council to do things differently. Residents are particularly interested in having more influence over service delivery and in particular there was real interest in more localised service delivery. Residents were clear that responsibility for services needs to remain with the Council and resident and local knowledge is important but that staff were the experts and paid to make decisions.
 - RSOs have emerged as the key role in service delivery as the 'go to individual', a figure that has developed close relationships with residents, and is trusted. Significantly the RSO group had a number of ideas about how they can deliver services more effectively. This should be built on to improve service satisfaction. Examining how the role can be enhanced or empowered should be considered as a way forward for this project.
 - There were no strong views expressed about the areas that would be most effective for any pilot scheme. In these circumstances it may be best for further work to explore proceeding with areas that are consistent with existing AHF boundaries.
 - There should be a clear relationship between the AHF and whatever emerges from further discussion that allows the AHF to have a key role in guiding, developing and informing the outcomes of the work.
19. The priority services identified in these sessions by all participants accords with the views of senior managers in 2014 about which of the housing services would be most appropriate for RELEASE namely repairs, ground maintenance and estate cleaning. In addition ASB emerged from the workshops as a service that would benefit from a resident led and local approach.

20. Government policy and legislation to encourage active resident involvement and participation in local decisions relates either to improving through scrutiny or devolution to external bodies such as TMOs or other forms of social enterprise, such as a community development trust or a mutual. Given the limited appetite for TMOs, the political sensitivity of perceptions of stock transfer, the outcomes of the workshops, and the concerns of Southwark's tenants and homeowners, consideration has been given to how to adapt existing structures to deliver the changes.
21. During the course of the project to date it has been noted that there is a large degree of commonality with other, on-going, council led projects. Most obviously with
 - Modernise
 - Increasing the number of TRAs
 - Digital inclusion
22. The parallel development of RELESE could address the stated resident desire for greater personal contact with officers without the need for the need for a physical base within each area. The development of remote working in residents homes using enhanced IT such as tablet computers will enable services to be delivered swiftly. Working with residents to co-design the delivery of services will ensure that changes are incorporated with the support of residents and will enable officers to promote the modernise agenda through greater promotion of My Southwark.

Proposal

23. Following discussions at Area Housing Forums and the workshops in the summer 2015, in the period October to December 2015 the council went back to the areas under consideration to hold a number of workshops and drop-in session about setting up RELESE project pilot schemes.
24. The consultation involved writing to all residents in the pilot areas (excluding TMO properties); running two feed back workshops for those who participated earlier and various drop in sessions at local libraries; placing posters around estates; attending Community Council meetings, Area Housing Forums and estate action days; and offering some drop ins for TRA members. All those attending were asked to complete a brief questionnaire about the issues that had arisen at earlier workshops to ensure that the council was looking to address the areas of most concern to residents.
25. The results of the consultation were overwhelmingly positive with over 90% supporting the initiative and 85 people volunteering to be involved.
26. The majority of people thought that repairs service should be looked at first.
27. 68% thought the panels should be established as part of the Area Housing Forums. A full breakdown of the responses is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
28. The early work we have done has established that there is an appetite to develop this project. Reflecting the outcomes from our discussions so far we are proposing that we establish three area panels as sub committees of each of the following area housing forums Camberwell East, Camberwell West and Peckham. The existing constitutions of the area housing forums are sufficiently broad to allow the establishment of sub committees to include people who are not participants in AHF or members of active TRAs, and permits AHF to have influence over service delivery and local budgets.
29. It is anticipated that the work of the sub- group will be intense and focused on the service redesign. In these circumstances it would be unreasonable to expect the AHF to add this to

their own agendas. In addition the sub group will be expected to work in a collaborative and co productive way. AHFs have a key role to play in monitoring the council's performance, advocating on residents' behalf, and contributing to the development of borough wide strategies and policies. Establishing a service design sub committee will ensure that the distinct roles are not blurred.

30. It is proposed that membership of the panel will be two members delegated by the Area Housing Forum and six other residents from the area. The relationship with the AHF is that it will report back its conclusions for final endorsement of any changes proposed. This will ensure that there remains wider democratic input to any of the proposals.
31. Flexibility on membership of the panel is essential to support wider engagement of our residents, in particular the Camberwell workshop included a significant proportion of residents of street properties who are often unable to participate in AHF as access to membership of this body is not clear for individuals who are not in TRAs. We would like to draw on the best talent in our areas, and those who are committed to working with us in a collaborative way on service design which is not the same as managing a TRA and its associated activity. It is imagined that engagement with the panel would vary depending on the focus of the service being redesigned.
32. The exact membership and how these members are selected would be subject to further discussion and feedback from the AHFs in the programme, the T&F group and the residents and staff who have participated so far. It is important that participants have confidence and trust in the pilots and residents in the membership of the sub committees to avoid the process being interpreted as a mechanism to undermine local democracy.
33. In order to remain focused and productive it is proposed that the subcommittees look at one service area at a time. This will ensure there is better scrutiny, understanding and evidence gathering about a service and enable joint problem solving. It is probable that the examination and solution phases will take between 6 months and a year before implementation depending on the service area, outcomes, degree of change required and consequent procurement, staffing and legal issues.
34. RELESE pilots will be iterative and use action learning to develop the structures and work streams. The project will enable the council and residents to benchmark service quality and customer satisfaction against different delivery mechanisms and provide a medium-term agenda for improvement that can be rolled out across the borough and adapted to the needs and capacity of different areas. There will need to be investment in on-going evaluation of the programme to capture the learning and knowledge.
35. In view of the high priority both residents, staff and SMT have placed on rethinking how repairs service is delivered, and that this service is the driver for much of the poor satisfaction rates, it is proposed that the initial task of the sub committees is to redesign our repairs service in these pilot areas based on local need and priorities.
36. The staff membership of the subcommittees while it is looking at repairs should include two representatives of the repairs service, representatives of the RSO's, reps from the call centre and two reps from community engagement to facilitate the group and support residents learning, participation and engagement with residents in the wider area. Staff will not be greater in number than resident participation. Such a distribution would mean even ratio membership reinforcing a partnership approach to RELESE.

37. It would be useful to review the systems thinking project work that has been done in the repairs team and share this with the sub groups to identify how this might improve performance in their areas.
38. Additionally the sub groups should also work with the modernise programme to identify how developments might bring improvements and how to ensure user confidence and accessibility to the work of the modernise team. To enhance this it is proposed that the sub committees also encouraged to become pilots in the digital inclusion programme.
39. To ensure that the pilots offer real learning opportunity the programme should be evaluated using staff or services independent of those that are involved in the direct delivery of the programme.
40. Once delivery of redesigned services begin, consideration should be given to removing the areas from the standard delivery targets to ensure that the redesign is not subject to distorting constraints from measures that are no longer fit for purpose, and potential barriers (based on what we measure) to creative and imaginative solutions are removed. New targets should be developed within each area that reflects the local priorities and new service standards. In this way overall departmental performance is not impacted by the success or failure or difference within RELESE and the pilots are not shackled by the need to deliver targets that are not local priorities.
41. There is no proposal at this stage to devolve decision making. The involvement process suggested above is one of scrutiny and service design. Nonetheless a huge amount of social and political capital will be lost if the service changes that emerge from the sub groups are not implemented. To make the process work well for all participants will necessitate significant culture change from residents and officers. In particular officers/contractors will need to be prepared to work with residents on an equal but different basis. It is important to be able to develop the skills to challenge and receive criticism without aggression or defensiveness.
42. There needs to be a commitment to trial the changes that emerge without knowing what these might be but trusting that the process will develop something that works. Early thought will need to be given to identify any parts of the repairs service that sits outside RELESE to minimise areas of potential conflict e.g. Gas Servicing. Residents will need to be clear about the budgets they will have to deliver the new services.
43. In order to be an active participant in the redesign of services residents will need to be trained and have a good working knowledge of the service delivery and how things work now and why to be able to unpick where from the customer point of view the system serves them poorly, and to understand how change to one part of the service might alter the experience at other points on the user journey. Both parties will need to be committed to seeing the problem from the others perspective.
44. Following the outcomes of the workshops held in early summer it is possible that service redesign will call for changes to staff roles and responsibilities, particularly in respect of RSO's and possibly call centre staff. An indication at this stage that this is possible would be useful.

Next Steps

45. The period October to December 2015 involved feed back of the sessions to date and engagement with residents in the areas about the proposals. In particular we sought to gather

support for the proposal in the areas, and refine the proposal with the feed back we have received. It has transpired that the overwhelming majority of those who responded to the consultation have agreed that we have correctly captured the concerns of residents in the earlier round of consultation.

46. The period between January and March will focus on developing the role of the sub committee members, the training and work programme in each of the RELESE pilots and recruitment of members to the subcommittees. This will involve preparing job specifications as well as job descriptions and establishing training plans, planning service visits and identifying the initial information requirements to make good decisions.
47. There will be a meeting inviting all those who expressed an interest in being involved to discuss the panels and their work in more detail in early February. Residents will be invited to apply to be panel members. By early March panel members will be selected. Interested residents who are not selected will become part of a group who will act as a sounding board for the work of the panel, meeting twice during the life time of the panel. Panels will begin in April 2016 and conduct their review and make recommendations by April 2017.
48. Once the sub committees have become established it is anticipated that residents, with community engagement support, will act as ambassadors for RELESE and new service delivery. Once the repairs service has been reviewed and delivery has begun work will begin to identify other local service priorities in each of the areas and the groups will identify the next areas for service review, evaluating their continued engagement and the need for a change in personnel to reflect the change in issue. Consideration will be given to the success of the approach and mechanisms for roll out to the remaining areas.

Time table for implementation of Sub groups

	Task	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
	1. Governance							
1.1	T& F, SMT and CMH agree proposals							
1.2	T& F, SMT and CMH agree proposals							
1.3	Sub committee constitution/terms of reference agreed							
1.4	Members JD and person specification agreed							
1.5	Recruit members of the sub committees							
	2. Feed back and consultation on proposals							
2.1	Feed back session for those who attended in June (staff and residents invited)							
2.2	Email to TRAs							
2.4	Visit TRAs and AHF in areas							
2.5	Organise a series of open days/drop in sessions/piggy back existing events such as CCs, EADs, other estate based events							
2.6	Short questionnaire on the hub							
2.7	Face book promotion							
2.8	Estate based posters							
2.9	Outreach to estates and properties uncovered by TRA							
	Repairs Evidence Collection							
3.1	TRAs and AHF							
3.2	Estate drop ins							