

Resident Involvement July to October 2019 Consultation Findings

Resident Involvement Service, Communities Directorate

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1. Executive Summary

- The consultation was aimed at the 55,000 households who live in council owned, leasehold and freehold homes and produced 1,120 responses with a very representative demographic of residents who live these homes. This is a large response and gives a high degree of confidence that the results reflect what the whole population would be more likely to say.
- There is a strong message that residents want more inclusive strong local communities and that significantly more people want to get involved than are at present.
- There is strong support for Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) proposals, with many positive comments on the work TRAs do for their communities, while at the same time highlighting the need to be more inclusive, diverse and accountable on how they operate and spend funds.
- Residents ask for opportunities to get involved where there are no TRAs and to also access resident involvement grant funding where for areas that do not have a TRA.
- The majority of respondents support the council's proposals for modernising the way it engages with its residents while at the same time highlighting the need for balance between digital and traditional ways. Overall there is a strong message that residents want a range of ways to get involved to suit their needs.
- Ward Forums as the place to discuss local housing issues is the least popular proposal both online questionnaire and other written submissions received.

2. Introduction

- Ensuring our council tenants and homeowners have a strong voice in shaping our housing services is a key priority for the council. Between July and October 2019 the council consulted residents on proposals to strengthen the way we do this.
- The Resident Involvement consultation aimed to include people from all of our communities so that voices heard were representative of people who live in council housing in the borough.
- The consultation was aimed to approximately 55,000 households and produced a total of 1,120 responses, with a very representative demographic of residents who live in council housing: over 170 people spoken to face to face, 669 responses to the questionnaire (over 132 of those submitted on paper and the rest on line), 20 written responses received from various bodies and 260 postcards from a campaign by SGTO
- This is a large sample response and gives a high degree of confidence that the results reflect what the whole population would be more likely to say.
- This report aims to summarise key findings from the Resident Involvement Consultation and is a factual representation of people's responses to questions asked as part of the consultation as well as discussions had with various groups and written submissions that explore topics in more depth.



3. Background

- In 2017 the council commissioned independent research to find out people's views of resident involvement. During that exercise over 1,000 residents expressed their views.
- In June 2018, following a recommendation of this research, a co-design panel of residents and officers was established to put forward proposals for a new model of engagement. Chaired by an independent expert, the Panel met between August and December 2018. In January 2019 the Panel produced a final report making a number of recommendations for the future development of the resident involvement service.
- These recommendations were published and made subject to consultation. The co-design process was also examined by the Housing & Environment Scrutiny Commission of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in April 2019.
- In June 2019 Cabinet approved a set of draft recommendations for a modernised resident involvement structure to go out to a three month consultation which started on the 9 July and ended on the 10 October 2019.

4. What did we do and how?

The latest Resident Involvement consultation aimed to include people from all our communities. Questions aimed to explain the proposals and to encourage people to share their views and speak about their experiences of resident involvement. A wide range of methods were used to engage people in consultation through:

- A comprehensive consultation communications campaign
- A questionnaire with 17 questions online, by post or by phone
- Invited written submissions from various bodies within the formal resident involvement consultation structure
- Face to face meetings and outreach activity

We want to involve you more in decisions that affect you

We're making it easier for more people who live in council homes to have a say about their home and estate and to hold the council to account. We call this resident involvement.

HAVE YOUR SAY

If you live in a council home or block visit www.southwark.gov.uk/residentinvolvement to:

- Find out why we're changing how you can have a say about decisions that affect your home and community
- Read about our ideas to make it easier for you to talk to us
- Tell us what you think of our ideas by completing a short questionnaire before **10 October 2019**. You can also call 020 7525 1251 to complete the questionnaire over the phone.

We will also be talking about our ideas at resident meetings and events over the summer.

Visit www.southwark.gov.uk/residentinvolvement to read the full proposals. You can give us your feedback until 10 October 2019.

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Southwark Council
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4. What did we do and how?

- The questionnaire had a combination of open and closed questions with free text options to enable both quantitative and qualitative data
- The proposals were also consulted on through the existing formal consultation structures such as Area Housing Forums, Tenant Council, Homeowner Council, Southwark TMO Committee, etc.
- The consultation was promoted in a wide range of ways such as publicity distributed in libraries, housing estates, via Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs), on Social Media, face to face at TRA summer events, etc.
- We worked with partners to reach the seldom-heard such as Southwark Disablement Association, Sheltered Housing Units, Citizens Advice Bureau, Young Advisors, etc.



Overview

Over the last year, we have been talking to residents about how best to involve people who live in our homes, in decisions that affect their homes and neighbourhoods.

We are proposing some significant changes, so we can:

- give more support for TRAs to put on local activities
- discuss housing issues at Ward Forums
- get more residents involved in making their estates great places to live and more involved in the decisions that most matter to them

To do this, we are proposing that we:

- Have discussions of housing issues at Ward Forums instead of Area Housing Forums
- Have a Residents' Pool of up to 1000 tenants and homeowners that we can call on, to get involved in the issues that matter to them
- Use a wider range of methods to involve people, so residents can participate in ways that suit them
- Set up a forum of tenants and homeowners, to directly advise the Cabinet Member for Housing. This will replace the current Tenant Council and Homeowner Council
- Increase the amount of resident involvement funding, to go to the grassroots, and provide an independent advice service for tenants and homeowners

Closes 10 Oct 2019

Opened 8 Jul 2019

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4. What did we do and how?

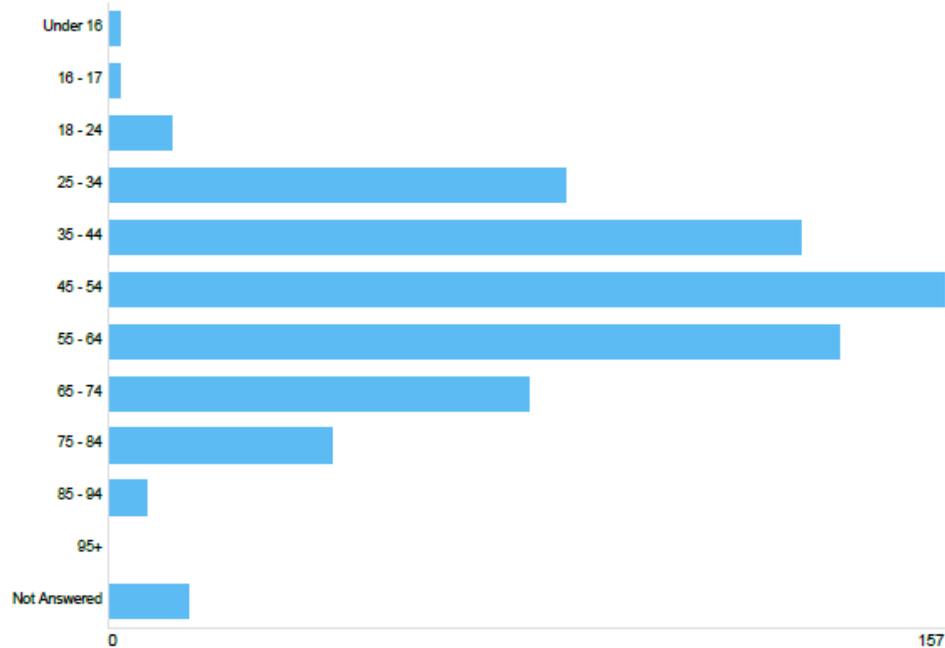
- On line consultation hub
- Dedicate webpage and FAQ
- Email HOC, TC, SGTO, MSHB and STMOC
- E-mail on RI consultation and FAQ to all TRAs
- Emails to Housing e-news subscribers (over 40,000 residents)
- Promotion on council social media
- Attendance to all Area Housing Forums
- Attendance to Tenants Council and Homeowner Council
- Posters distributed to estate notice boards and to all libraries
- Attendance to Southwark TMO Committee
- Attendance to 11 TRA summer events
- Meeting with Citizens Advice Bureau and leaflets sent
- Information published on Community Southwark website
- Email consultation details sent to Faith groups (200 addresses)
- Email consultation details sent to Forum for Equalities and Human Rights
- Translated leaflet sent to contacts in the Latin American community
- Visits to Sheltered Housing Units
- Mail shot to all residents living in Temporary Accommodation
- Citizens UK emailed flyer and meeting request
- Bede emailed with flyer and meeting request
- Flyers and posters sent to LGBT network
- Face to face engagement with the Gipsy and Traveller community
- Poster and flyers sent to council youth service providers
- Information published on Southwark Disablement Association FB page
- Paid for advertisement on Southwark News and Southwark Weekender
- Southwark Life Autumn edition news in brief item and “Last Chance” ad
- Southwark Disablement Association consultation drop in session
- Young Advisors carried out face to face surveys and spoke to over 50 young people who live in our estates



5. Who responded to the questionnaire?

Respondents to the Resident Involvement consultation were broadly representative of the general Southwark population.

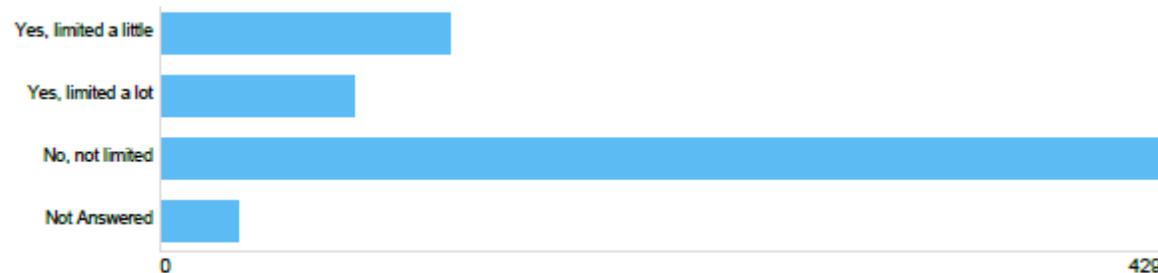
Age



Option	Total	Percent
Under 16	2	0.30%
16 - 17	2	0.30%
18 - 24	12	1.79%
25 - 34	86	12.86%
35 - 44	130	19.43%
45 - 54	157	23.47%
55 - 64	137	20.48%
65 - 74	79	11.81%
75 - 84	42	6.28%
85 - 94	7	1.05%
95+	0	0%
Not Answered	15	2.24%

In addition to the above, more than 50 young people were engaged face to face as part of targeted outreach

Disability



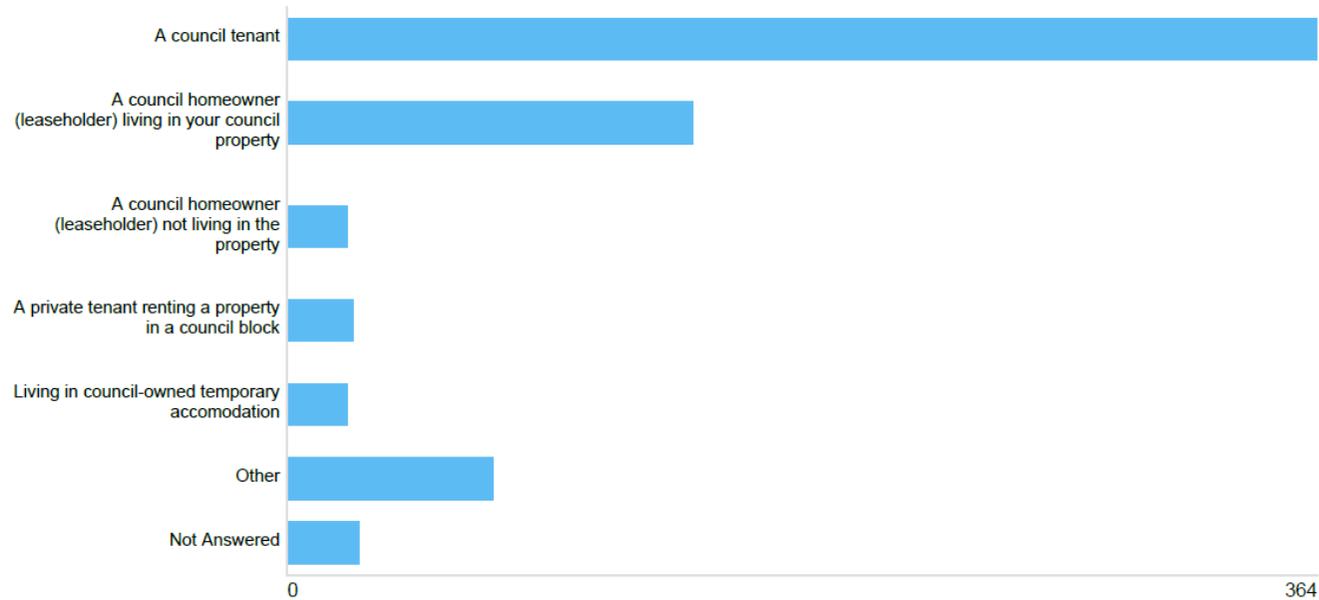
Option	Total	Percent
Yes, limited a little	124	18.54%
Yes, limited a lot	83	12.41%
No, not limited	429	64.13%
Not Answered	33	4.93%

5. Who responded to the questionnaire?

<u>Ethnicity</u>	Option	Total	Percent
	White British	221	33.03%
	English	50	7.47%
	Scottish	7	1.05%
	Welsh	1	0.15%
	Northern Irish	8	1.20%
	Irish	14	2.09%
	Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller	1	0.15%
	Other European	29	4.33%
	Other White	23	3.44%
	Black British	92	13.75%
	Caribbean	18	2.69%
	Nigerian	34	5.08%
	Ghanaian	13	1.94%
	Sierra Leonean	17	2.54%
	Somali	3	0.45%
	Other African	17	2.54%
	Other Black	4	0.60%
	Asian British	6	0.90%
	Indian	3	0.45%
	Bengali	3	0.45%
	Chinese	8	1.20%
	Pakistani	1	0.15%
	Vietnamese	1	0.15%
	Filipino	2	0.30%
	Any other Asian	1	0.15%
	White and Black Caribbean	8	1.20%
	White and Black African	7	1.05%
	White and Asian	2	0.30%
	Other mixed background	11	1.64%
	Arab	3	0.45%
	Latin American	7	1.05%
	Any other ethnicity	18	2.69%
	Not Answered	36	5.38%

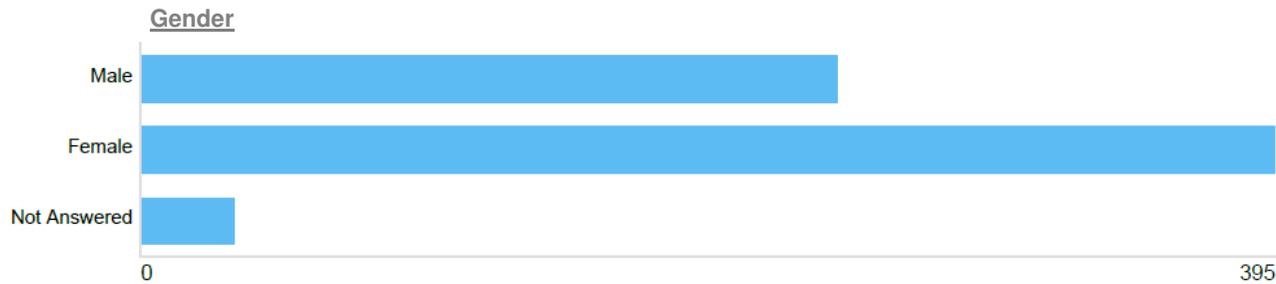
5. Who responded to the questionnaire?

Tenure

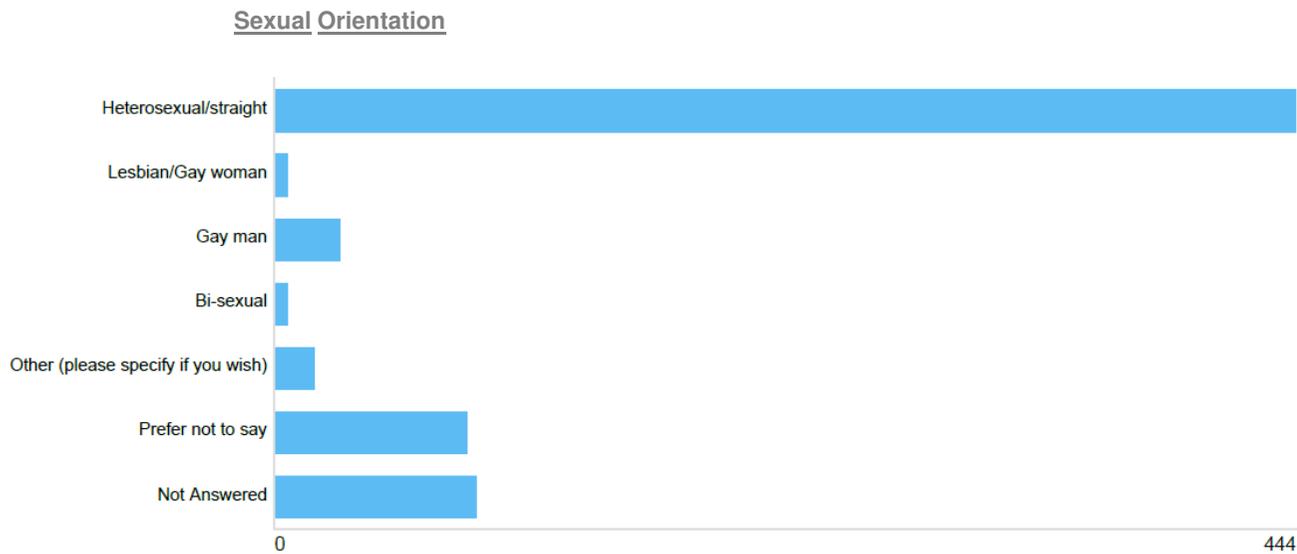


Option	Total	Percent
A council tenant	364	54.41%
A council homeowner (leaseholder) living in your council property	143	21.38%
A council homeowner (leaseholder) not living in the property	21	3.14%
A private tenant renting a property in a council block	23	3.44%
Living in council-owned temporary accommodation	21	3.14%
Other	72	10.76%
Not Answered	25	3.74%

5. Who responded to the questionnaire?



Option	Total	Percent
Male	242	36.17%
Female	395	59.04%
Not Answered	32	4.78%

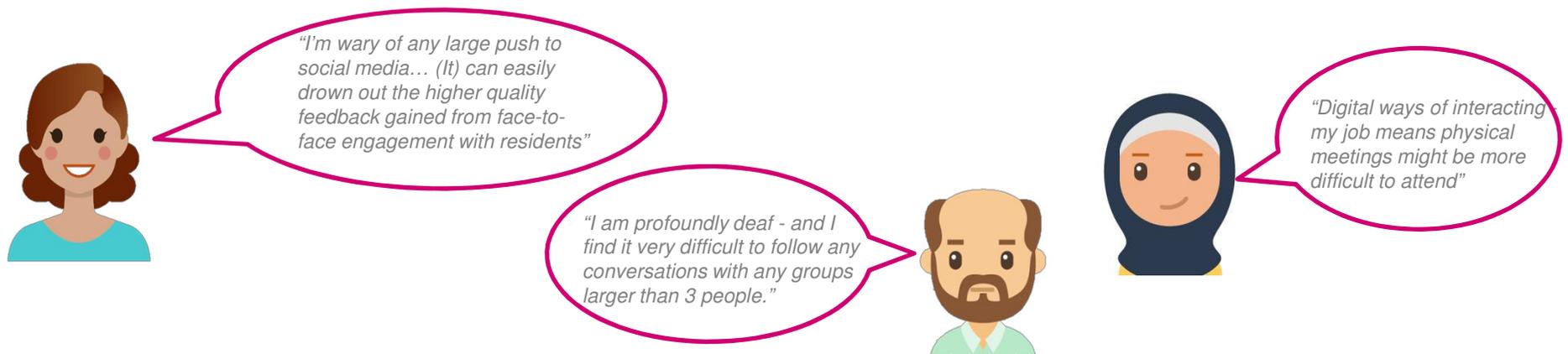


Option	Total	Percent
Heterosexual/straight	444	66.37%
Lesbian/Gay woman	5	0.75%
Gay man	28	4.19%
Bi-sexual	5	0.75%
Other (please specify if you wish)	17	2.54%
Prefer not to say	83	12.41%
Not Answered	87	13.00%

6. What did people say? questionnaire responses analysis

Levels and means of engagement

- 31% (208) of respondents are already engaged in resident involvement, 68% (455) say they are not.
- 65% (435) said they would like to be more involved. 15% (102) said they would not like to be more involved, of those over 4% (30) state not having time as a reason. Of the 21 who chose “other reason”, disability/health and mobility limitations are the most quoted reasons.
- 57% (383) of respondents state they have a TRA covering their area while 30% (205) did not to know.
- E-mail is the most popular way respondents would like to be kept up to date about decisions that affect them with 73% (491) choosing this option. The second most popular at 52% (349) is meetings followed by questionnaires and surveys 41% (276). Of the 6% (40) who chose “other” letter/post is the most quoted preference. A few respondents state notice boards and estate events as means of communicating. Some are sceptical in relation to the use of IT, while others are in favour.
- 356 people answered the question “what would you like to hear about/have a say about?”. The most popular 36% (244) was “information on maintenance of my estate”, followed by 30% (205) “information on how my rent/service charges is set and spent” and 24%(164) “how to contact my local councillors”.
- Of the 38 people who chose “other”, who is who in the council and how to report issues was the most popular theme, followed by information on local neighbourhood/area level decisions.



6. What did people say? questionnaire responses analysis

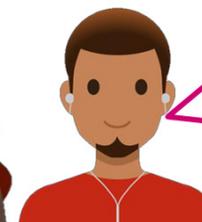
Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs)

- 75% (505) strongly agree that the council should continue to support TRAs and almost 78% (521) that the council should support residents in setting up TRAs where there are none
- 80% (539) strongly agree that the council should hold annual residents meetings where there are not TRAs
- 84% (564) strongly agree that the council should help TRAs to be as inclusive and representative of their local community as possible
- 65% (435) strongly agree that, where there are no TRAs, funding should be allocated to local community organisations for the benefit of tenants and leaseholders
- Almost 65% (433) strongly agree that the council should revise its residents' training offer.
- There were a number of respondents that felt the council should do more to promote more widely TRAs and their benefits and how to set them up
- A number of respondents commented that TRAs were, in their experience, not inclusive or not representative of the local community and that the council should do more to ensure TRAs are more open and transparent as well as accountable for the funds they are allocated. On the other hand a lesser number of respondents felt that TRAs should be totally independent from the council
- A number of respondents stated that the council should “speak to” and consult with the wider community and not solely TRAs



“A significant benefit of our TRA is that it provides a regular forum for people in the block to get together. This has numerous benefits including increased sense of community, reduced elder loneliness, meeting new people, welcoming new residents, and stopping antisocial behaviour...”

“I think the council puts too much focus on TRAs. They serve some good purposes (e.g. organising social events) but they add an extra layer of intermediation when it comes to addressing housing issues, and this is not helpful. They also tend to be dominated by those who have time to attend meetings. It would be better to focus on how residents can have direct and meaningful access to council staff to address issues.”



“I feel very strongly that the council should carefully look into the modus operandi of TRA and closely monitor them.”

6. What did people say? questionnaire responses analysis

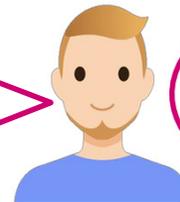
Funding and Resources

- Exploring how libraries can be used as resource centres for residents was strongly agreed with by 72% (484), a small number of respondents state this should not be at the expense of TRA hall resources.
- 61% (412) strongly agree that TRA grants should be allocated at local level and almost 67% (446) strongly agree that the council should allow applications from residents if there is no TRA and it is clear the activity is supported by and will benefit tenants and leaseholders.
- 72% (484) strongly agree that Councillors should work with local residents to determine local priorities for spending the resident involvement fund. Only a very small number of respondents state that Cllrs should not be involved in local decisions for this funding
- Top three priorities for TRA grants funding: bringing the community together (34%), improving community safety (24%) and improving health and wellbeing (14%). A number of respondents state all are equally important. A very popular suggestions made by respondents is activities for young people and a few comments are made on the theme of fairness in distribution of funding and accountability.
- A number of people commented that the funding application process should be simplified and training on how to complete good quality applications provided to residents.
- 64%(428) strongly agree that some funding should continue to be allocated borough-wide to delivery outcomes that benefit both tenants and leaseholders.
- 73% (491) strongly agree that some funding should continue to be used to provide access to independent advice services

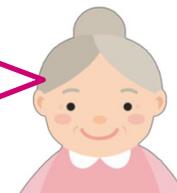


"I think the council shouldn't be seeking to narrow the scope of these grants. Different uses are relevant in different places at different times."

"Funding for tenants and residents organisations should be safeguarded to make sure that these organisations are free to disagree with and oppose the council."



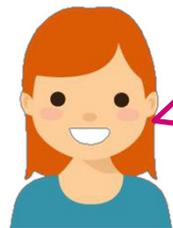
"The grant funding application should be simplified. The current ones are too difficult. Hence, people with learning difficulty serving as volunteers on their TRAs will find it difficult to apply."



6. What did people say? questionnaire responses analysis

Strategic and borough wide engagement

- 51% (342) strongly agree that ward forums should discuss housing issues. This is the least agreed with proposal which gives less confidence that residents in general would prefer this option. Some had concerns about the proposal's viability and that it will dilute the importance of housing issues.
- Almost 71% (474) strongly agree that tenants and leaseholders should jointly hold the council to account and 76% (513) strongly agree that such a body should be as representative as possible of those who live in council homes.
- A number of respondents commented that tenants and leaseholders should be able to have separate meetings to address tenure specific issues.
- 75% (504) strongly agree that said body should scrutinise the management of the council's housing stock and 74%(499) strongly agree that it should oversee how the council engages with residents
- 74% (495) agree that it is important to offer a range of ways for people to get involved. 53% (357) say they would be interested in joining an on line engagement pool. A number of respondents commented that the balance between online and face to face engagement has to be right.
- 58% (392) strongly agree that social media/digital engagement would get more people involved. A few people commented that meetings are important and should be retained. Some commented on the importance of ensuring that people who can't attend meetings also have opportunities to get involved.
- 70% (472) strongly agree that there should be an annual conference open to all those who live in council homes



"Having separate Tenant's and Homeowners' Councils is important because the issues affecting the two groups are quite distinct. Merging them is a mistake and will make it harder to hold the council to account."



"Be as inclusive as possible, include many different ways of engaging with all of your residents so that a big spectrum of ideas and suggestions are captured. Include young people as much as possible so that they have pride and feel part of the community."



"If you do open up a digital means of communication, think how you will disseminate those communications to everyone - 'summaries' of what you may get can be somewhat selective, depending on the summary's author's own bias."

6. What did people say? Area Housing Forums

Officers attended the 12 Area Housing Forums (AHF) to present and discuss the proposals. A total of 103 residents took part in these discussions. The below is a summary of the feedback received:

- There was a consensus that the council should indeed support TRAs
- Whilst one forum commented favourably on the Ward Forum proposals, most of those forums that commented on this were critical. Concerns raised were in relation to time and space, politicisation, local identity and interests and high number of meetings might lead to lower – rather than higher – levels of participation.
- One forum commented in favour of the creation of a single tenure Tenant and Homeowner forum but through the merging of the existing Tenant and Homeowner councils. Other forum also agreed with a single tenure body, but stated that on some issues it may be better to consult with a single-tenure sub-group. Other forums that commented on this proposal were critical.
- A number of AHFs commented on lack of detail in the proposals and that they don't provide reasoning as to how and why they are better than what is proposed to be replaced.
- A number of forums commented on the council's capacity to deliver the new proposed structure and the need to improve the quality of support to resident involvement being as or more important than the needed to improve the structures
- Only one forum commented on the Housing Scrutiny Commission proposals stating that more information was needed on this.

6. What did people say? Area Housing Forums

- The on-line panel proposal elicited a lot of feedback. Several forums acknowledged the potential for various digital platforms to play a valuable role but the following concerns were raised: cost, exclusivity, lack of detail, lack of expertise and importance of face-to-face communication.
- Few forums commented on the annual resident conference. One supported it and one rejected it.
- Resident Involvement Fund generated varying feedback. In one of the forums, of the nine voting members at the meeting, there was a 3-way split between those agreeing the proposals, those rejecting them, and those abstaining. Amongst the points raised on this matter were legality, control, who decides who gets funding and on what basis, with many forums expressing a strong view that decision on funding should be shaped by tenants and residents.

Southwark TMO Committee

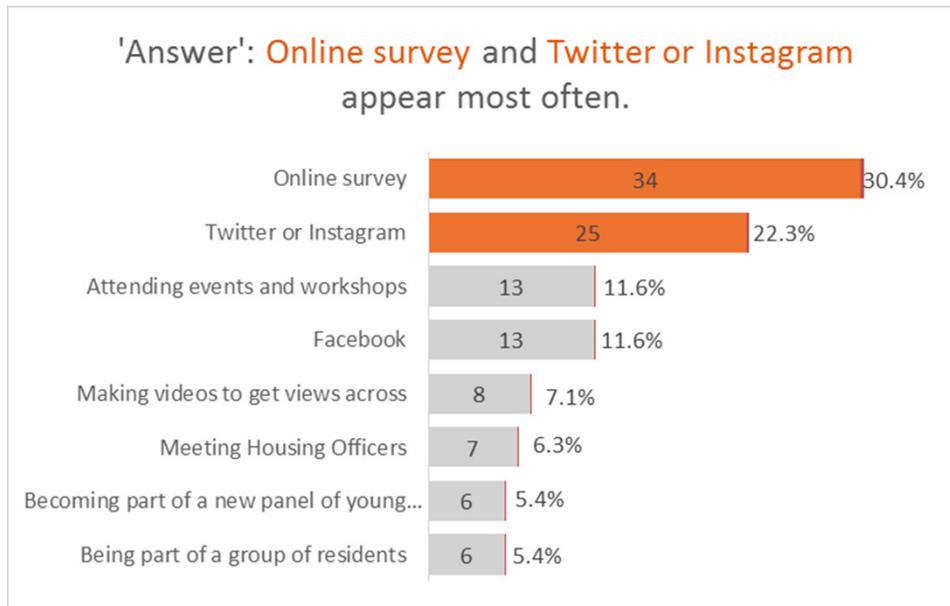
- They are of the opinion that ward forums would not have the capacity to discuss housing matters in the required depth as there will be so many other local matter to discuss.
- Proposed to have a third place on the housing scrutiny commission is allocated to a TMO representative
- They expressed concerns that the funding proposals might put SGTO at risk and they expressed their desire to be able to continue using their services
- Queried how the council will ensure that the new structure is properly resourced and that there is buy in and meaningful engagement from senior officers and members.

6. What did people say? Homeowner Council submission summary

- Proposals put great emphasis on digital communication and the involvement of young people. Concern that emphasis on engagement with young people may also involve a cost cutting move to digital consultation. Points out that those digitally excluded will be unable to participate in the online panel.
- Employment of modern technologies might see more residents engaged, it is likely that the council's satisfaction levels may improve, while underlying service delivery outcomes remain unchanged.
- Acknowledges intense three month period of consultation but criticises the earlier period, citing a reluctance to consult properly with existing resident bodies on the subject of its resident engagement structures.
- Commends the council for proposing that there should be continued support of TRAs and also for its aspiration to broaden participation but questions the council's capacity to support and develop TRAs and whether it will dedicate the necessary resources to this.
- States that Ward Forums don't provide opportunity for proper engagement by residents in housing matters. Also states that Housing forums, chaired by elected residents and inclusive and open to all, are the appropriate platform to consult on cross-tenure neighbourhood and area issues.
- Indicates that there is an imperative need for a broad-based, democratic strategic homeowner body and that a modernised Homeowner Council should be retained.
- Points out that when an online panel is established, there is also an opportunity to network and integrate online participation with active residents' groups and homeowners on the online panel could be linked into Homeowner Council's current website.
- Advocates that decisions on Resident Involvement funding should continue to be shaped by residents.
- Homeowner Council believes that the council's 16,000 homeowners should be represented by a body that is open, elected and democratic, as Homeowner Council is and not by one that is closed, appointed, technocratic and small in number.
- States that the My Southwark Homeowners Board should oversee the functioning of the Agency. To ensure its independence in this role, support for the Board is provided by a council section other than the MySouthwark Homeowners service, a suitable alternative being, given that it is a resident body, the Communities Division.

6. What did people say? Young people outreach

- The Question was: *“I would like to be consulted by the Council about my housing in the following ways:”*
- 45 completed questionnaires received and analysed. Note that one person could have multiple answers.
- Taking part in an online survey followed by using a Twitter or Instagram account were the most popular choices (30% and 22% in that order respectively)



- Becoming part of a new panel of young residents and being part of a group of residents on their estate were the least popular (5% of the responses each).
- 33 respondents provided their age. 55% of them (18) were 16 -19 years old.
- Young People prefer to be contacted on their mobile phones. Around three in five of them provided their mobile number (28 out of 45). The use of email address was popular in 33% of the respondents (15 out of 45).

6. What did people say? Other written responses

260 postcards were received via SGTO campaign, the points made are:

- Housing Forums should not be merged with community forums
- Agendas should not be Cllr controlled and chaired, Housing forums should continue to be controlled by residents
- Councillors should not be involved in making funding decisions for TRAs
- Digital engagement should only be used as additional support not as replacement for engagement with elected residents representatives

Written responses were also submitted by the following bodies

- Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations Board
- Liberal Democrats party
- Barry Area TRA
- Homeowners Council
- Tenant Council
- Individual and collective submissions by a number of residents
- Kennington Park Road TRA
- Old Kent Road Area Housing Forum
- Sceaux Gardens T&RA
- Chair of Southwark Travellers Action Group
- Tabard North TRA
- Borough Bankside Area Housing Forum
- Rotherhithe Area Housing Forum

6. What did people say? Written submissions

The main themes emerging from the 20 written submissions are:

TRAs

- TRA should be more accessible and welcome commitment to TRAs

Funding

- General feel that Councillors should not be involved in funding decisions and this would risk of politicisation of funding allocation
- All who pay should be able to draw on Resident Involvement Fund while the need transparent criteria for allocating the fund over time

Area Housing Forums

- General feel that Ward Forums as the place to discuss housing issues won't work
- A few feel that AHF should continue and that Cllrs should attend them

Residents Pool

- Some feel that online engagement discriminatory and the pool would need to be properly resourced and not be the only way of engaging

General comments

- Mixed views on the consultation, some thought it was undemocratic while others thought it was good
- Some requests not to merge Homeowner Council and Tenant Council
- Concern that residents could have less influence in new structures
- Council should run resident involvement better
- The council should listen to residents more
- Need to clarify relationship between Resident Involvement and Empowering Communities