

Item No. 20.	Classification: Open	Date: 24 March 2020	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Putting Residents First Review - Update	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Kieron Williams, Housing Management and Modernisation	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR KIERON WILLIAMS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND MODERNISATION

We are committed to investing in our homes and estates to ensure they are in good condition and great places to live. Only by working together with our tenants and residents will we get this investment right. Our homes are just that - people's homes. It is essential that the people who live in them have a real say over the work undertaken to their home, including effective ways to make sure work is done to a high standard. As the works we do to our homes are paid for either through tenants rents or homeowners service charges it is also essential that our tenants and homeowners are able to scrutinise whether work is good value for money.

Our Putting Residents First framework sets out our commitment to work with our tenants and residents to get major works to their homes right. It details the approach we will take, including asking residents their view on what work is needed before we develop a specification, setting up a Resident Project Team so we can work closely with people from each estate, consulting all tenants and homeowners on the full scope of work to their homes, and involving residents throughout the works to make sure they are done to a high standard. The following pages set out how we have strengthened the way we do this this year and also how we will undertake a further review to make sure we continue to improve our approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Notes that the Council's Asset Management department has begun to review and refresh the processes that shape how the Council involves and engages residents with regard to major works to their blocks and estates. This will ensure lessons learnt to this point are adopted and applied going forward.
2. Notes that the Putting Residents First (PRF) Review will look again at the current PRF standards and consider how the Council can improve its resident consultation, particularly with reference to the new Resident Involvement structure and digital communication options.
3. Notes that the Review will seek to ensure that engagement with residents places major works as a core foundation of the Great Estates Guarantee, links appropriately with the new build programme and seeks to enhance resident safety on their estates.
4. Notes that consultation with residents will begin at the first Local Housing Forums taking place in April, with a final report to Cabinet scheduled for October 2020. A

full proposed timetable can be found in Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5. The original PRF standards were developed by a working party chaired by Councillor Ian Wingfield, then Lead Cabinet Member for Housing. Following significant resident consultation the standards were introduced in 2012 as formal criteria for consultation during major works. Initially these took the form of bullet points explaining how residents should be consulted before, during and after major works.
6. The standards were reviewed and updated in 2015 by a panel of residents - including tenants, leaseholders and homeowners - facilitated by Community Engagement and Major Works. A number of changes were made, resulting in the current 25 PRF steps. See Appendix 2.
7. It should be noted that, following the introduction of PRF, consistent improvements in resident satisfaction have been noted. In 2013/14, satisfaction averaged 80% amongst both tenants and leaseholders. This increased to 91% in 2014/15, and again in 2015/16 to 93%, during the Warm, Dry, Safe (WDS) programme.
8. Since the start of the Quality Homes Investment Programme (QHIP) in 2016/17, which has sought to go beyond the Decent Homes Standard by providing residents with new kitchens and bathrooms alongside a comprehensive suite of maintenance and fire safety works, resident satisfaction has remained high, currently standing at more than 95% for the 2019/20 financial year.
9. However, it should be noted that the above figures represent a small sample of residents and further analysis of reasons for dissatisfaction is required and will form part of the Review.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

10. Following its autumn conference in 2018, the London Borough of Southwark's Homeowner Council heard expressions of concern from various conference attendees regarding communication and consultation practices around aspects of major works projects. Subsequently, this led to the formation of the Major Works Communication and Consultation Task and Finish Group (TFG), which included council tenants and homeowners.
11. The TFG's draft report, produced by Resident Involvement, explored the Council's communication and consultation methods in relation to major works projects, and outlined feedback and concerns held by TFG members with regard to these processes.
12. It was found that there was little difference of opinion between tenants and homeowners. This indicates that the report's findings may be reflective of the view of residents as a whole, and as such, the TFG report will be used to form part of the upcoming review of PRF.
13. The key areas of concern identified in the report were as follows:
 - A perceived lack of openness in the Council's procedures and communications regarding major works

- A lack of confidence in people, systems and processes within the Council. Residents expressed a lack of confidence in the ability of the Council to appropriately administer major works contracts
 - A perceived lack of meaningful consultation with residents (including drawing on residents' local knowledge) when drawing up plans for major works
 - A perceived lack of empathy and sensitivity from Council staff and contractors towards residents who are disrupted by major works projects. In particular, although the Council acknowledges and recognises the inconvenience of major works in policy documents, it is felt that this sentiment is often not effectively cascaded down to staff and contractors on site
 - A feeling that residents need to feel respected and valued, as both customer and partners, in major works projects.
14. As recommended by the report, the review of PRF intends to draw on the themes highlighted above to refresh the standards and procedures, in close consultation with residents and other stakeholders. The Review will seek to give residents the fullest confidence, satisfaction, and sense of meaningful participation in major works projects.

CURRENT WORK

15. Following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member and the Director of Asset Management, work has already begun to improve resident engagement on the QHIP Year 6 (2021/22) schemes.
16. Additional actions have been agreed which include:
- Following the first drop-in session for residents, a letter is sent to all residents which includes a list of FAQs together with answers to others raised at the drop-in session
 - A survey for residents is included which asks for their opinions about the condition of their home and block
 - An invitation to ward members, the TMO/T&RA and Resident Project Group members is sent, requesting attendance at an estate walk-about to review the initial feedback and pick up further issues
 - A refresher workshop has been held with staff, and an updated Induction pack for new staff has been put together
17. This improved engagement is applicable to all major works schemes irrespective of the method of procurement.
18. The major works teams have been given clear milestones to work to, along with levels of delegated authority and appropriate guidelines to introduce the additional actions in order to increase resident engagement and satisfaction.
19. Officers will be expected to update a monitor database to show when the actions have been completed and this will be reviewed at the monthly monitor meetings.

Policy implications

20. The Council Plan details eight Fairer Future Commitments to the residents and businesses of Southwark that outline the areas the council is working towards as an organisation to create a fairer future for all.
21. The Southwark Housing Strategy to 2043 set out the Council's first long-term housing strategy, and marks the council out over others in setting out a long-term plan of action. Principle 2 states '*We will demand the highest standards of quality, making Southwark a place where you will not know whether you are visiting homes in private, housing association or council ownership*', and more specifically the following commitments as set out in the strategy:
 - Putting in place a robust 30 year business plan, enabling us to invest in our homes, improve energy efficiency and provide a planned, preventative approach to maintaining and investing in our housing stock
 - Providing a quality kitchen and bathroom for all council homes
 - Carrying out other improvement works to our stock and the surrounding area, including increasing estate security.

Community impact statement

22. Improving housing in Southwark is central to the Council's wider plans to create a fairer future for all. Access to appropriate, good quality, genuinely affordable homes is important not just for residents but also to the wider economy and essential to shaping a borough that all residents can be proud of and which is truly sustainable into the future. A key part of this is the active management of current council housing assets, including resident consultation, and the PRF Review will ensure the Council continues to improve resident engagement in major works to their homes.
23. With regard to locations where the decision is taken to proceed with investment in existing stock, those living in properties with major works may experience some inconvenience and disruption in the short-term, while works are taking place but communities as a whole will benefit in the longer term.
24. In local areas, the effects will be mitigated by working closely with residents on the delivery process and using experience gained on a significant number of recent projects. Residents continue to be at the centre of and involved in works that take place. Where financially viable other positive community impacts will also be included as part of the works.
25. The works will provide a better standard of accommodation for residents and contribute to improved general health and wellbeing. Due consideration will be given to those tenants with specific needs both during works and after completion.
26. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work, in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Consultation on major works seeks to involve as wide a range of stakeholders as possible.

Resource implications

27. None.

Legal implications

28. There are no significant legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The Director of Law and Democracy and her staff will provide advice to officers on any legal and governance issues arising from the review of resident engagement arrangements.

Financial implications

29. None.

Reasons for Lateness

30. This report was submitted late due to colleagues being unable to provide their comments any earlier as well as staff have also been working on Covid 19 BCP's providing day to day support around that.

Reasons for Urgency

31. The decisions must be taken before the next scheduled meeting of cabinet in June 2020 in order to ensure that the timetable is agreed.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Proposed timetable for the Review
Appendix 2	Current Putting Residents First Standards

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Kieron Williams, Member for Housing Management and Modernisation	
Lead Officer	David Hodgson, Director of Asset Management	
Report Author	Paul Wood, Programme Manager, Asset Management	
Version	Final	
Dated	19 March 2020	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	19 March 2020	