

# Housing, Community Safety and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission

Monday 25 November 2024

7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1  
2QH

## Supplementary Agenda No.1

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#### Contact

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Date: 20 November 2024

## Housing Department, London Borough of Southwark

### Draft Resident Involvement Strategy

#### Executive summary

One of the enduring legacies of the covid-19 pandemic is when you empower residents and work with them in a joined-up way, listen to them and weave their views into the fabric of defining and designing services, a lot more can be achieved. This strategy builds on the remarkable success achieved by working with residents during the height of the pandemic.

Residents have asked for more flexible and inclusive ways to voice their views. At the heart of the strategy is the role of community power in making things happen on all our estates and neighbourhoods. Building strong and effective relationships with residents and treating them with respect is key to unlocking the potential of the community. This requires an inclusive and partnership approach underpinned by a joined-up and respectful engagement style that values the diverse perspectives and reinforces trust and respect.

**Four key draft strategic priorities** have been developed to underpin our commitment to the highest level of resident involvement with a clear action plan to ensure we listen to the voice of our residents and firmly embed their priorities in delivering high standard customer-focused services:

- Giving power to residents to shape their neighbourhoods and estates.
- A wide range of involvement opportunities for residents to have a say in decision-making and development of policy and strategy.
- Providing flexible and adaptable mechanisms for residents to scrutinise the design and delivery of landlord services.
- Embracing and embedding equality and diversity in line with the principles of Southwark Stands Together

**Foreword by the Cabinet Member for Council Homes**



As the Cabinet Member for council homes, my ambition is to put power back into the hands of local residents to make decisions on how to shape their estates and neighbourhoods. My aim is to put the needs and aspirations of residents at the heart of delivering good quality homes and Landlord services. Our residents are the biggest experts on their homes and the local neighbourhood issues that affect them.

The tragedy at Grenfell, the findings of the Hackitt report and the pandemic have highlighted the crucial significance of tenant involvement, tenant voice, community engagement and community power. The White Paper and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 strengthens the accountability of the council as a landlord for providing safe homes, quality services and treating residents fairly and with respect.

Trust and respect from our residents is earned by consistently delivering good quality landlord services and making sure we listen and act on the things residents have told us. The Regulator of Social Housing has created a new approach for assessing the performance of landlords at delivering good quality homes and services. We welcome the requirement to provide performance management information available to all residents. The resident perception surveys will enable all residents to determine and assess how well we are doing in delivering services to all residents.

The success of the Great Estates project highlights the benefits of people power in shaping their neighbourhoods and estates. The Great Estates project was designed with residents and for residents. The success it has recorded in transforming the pilot estates is testament to our commitment to working with empowered communities to transform the way we manage and deliver resident services on our estates and in our neighbourhoods.

Southwark Council owns and manages around 57600 homes occupied by council tenants, leaseholders and shared owners. We value the input of all our residents in creating great places to live and work, whether tenants, homeowners or other household members living in council homes.

Our resident involvement strategy lays out our aims for the next four years. It seeks to offer a variety of ways for residents to get involved, in a manner that suits their individual lifestyle and the time they have available. I am committed to working alongside officers and residents to ensure that this resident involvement strategy puts residents at the heart of the housing service. A housing service which continues to provide an effective, value for money package that answers the needs of today's residents and those of the future and returns power to local people to make local decisions about their estates and neighbourhoods.

Cllr Sarah King

**Cabinet Member for Council Homes**

**Introduction by the Strategic Director of Housing**



This four-year strategy seeks to set out a journey. The journey is to build on the already positive role we have in meaningfully involving residents in our housing service and giving power back to local residents to shape the services in their neighbourhoods.

We recognise that getting involved can mean a significant time commitment as well as personal energy. The aim of this strategy is to open up more ways for you to get involved. We recognise the importance of offering a range of methods which are fit for purpose and provide an opportunity for people to get involved at whatever level best suits their lifestyle.



The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 give tenants greater powers. This includes improved access to swift and fair redress when something goes wrong and enhanced powers for the Regulator of Social Housing to ensure landlords provide homes that are decent, safe and of a very good quality.

The new proactive consumer regulatory framework give more powers to the regulator to ensure landlords continue to provide homes that are safe, decent, well-maintained and tenants are treated fairly and with respect. As a peopled powered council and landlord, it is critical that we listen to the voice of residents and weave your views and perceptions into designing and delivering a landlord service that meets your needs and aspirations.

Southwark welcomes the new powers given to the regulator to ensure that we are providing good quality homes that are safe and our services are accessible to residents and we continue to treat all residents fairly and with respect. As we know from working with our residents, housing plays a vital role in offering a new start and a bedrock for accessing life's opportunities. Working together in partnership is therefore so important, because Southwark's housing is so much more than just a roof over someone's head, it is a home and a secure foundation to go forward on.

Hakeem Osinaike

**Strategic Director of Housing**

## **Resident Involvement Strategy**

### **Resident involvement in Southwark is about:**

- Giving power to residents to shape, influence and direct the design and delivery of landlord services.
- Working with residents to understand their needs, priorities and aspirations for their neighbourhoods and local community.
- Treating our residents courteously, fairly and with respect.
- Adapting our approach to resident involvement in response to the changing needs and complex work patterns and lifestyles of our residents.
- Developing a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by residents and working together to find practical solutions.
- Embedding the principles of co-design, co-creation and co-production of services that put residents firmly in the driving seat.
- Demonstrating care and empathy in the way we serve our residents.

**There are four draft priorities that underpin our resident involvement strategy:**

- Giving power to residents to shape their neighbourhoods and estates.
- A wide range of involvement opportunities for residents to have a say in decision-making and development of policy and strategy.
- Providing flexible and adaptable mechanisms for residents to scrutinise the design and delivery of landlord services.
- Embracing and embedding equality and diversity in line with the principles of Southwark Stands Together

In order to achieve the key strategic priorities, the strategy sets out a clear action plan to deliver outcomes that are verified by residents and assessed by the Regulator of Social Housing. We will at all times work with residents to:

- Define the service
- Set the service standards
- Monitor the service.
- Review the service using the GAP analysis framework

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 – Giving power to communities to shape their neighbourhoods and estates**

At the heart of the community power model is:

- Putting residents at the heart of everything we do.
- Empowering communities to shape the places they live in and make decisions about issues which affect their lives.
- Working with you to design the services we provide and support local people to deliver for their community



It entails changing the power dynamics of those who hold leadership and operational roles in the council and residents so that the learned and lived experiences of local people is woven into the fabric of decision-making that affects the lives, hopes and aspirations of local people.

We are keen to effectively use the individual and collective wealth of knowledge, skills and lived experiences of residents to deliver good quality landlord services that meet the needs and aspirations of residents. The community power model offers the opportunity to collaboratively work with residents to design and deliver services with better outcomes and value for money.

It entails putting power into the hands of local people to make local decisions because they are in a much better position as local residents to solve local problems. It requires:

- a) Co-producing solutions to complex neighbourhood service challenges
- b) Agreeing how we can jointly build an accountable framework with residents at the helm
- c) Co-create a communication, monitoring and scrutiny framework to meet the often complex and varying needs of residents.

The success of the Great Estates project highlights the benefits of people power in shaping their neighbourhoods and estates. The Great Estates project was designed with residents and for residents and the success it has recorded illustrates what can be achieved when we listen to and work with residents.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 - A wide range of involvement opportunities for residents to have a say in decision-making and development of policy and strategy**

- a) **Local Housing Forums (LHF)** –There are five local area forums which are chaired by residents. Everyone who lives in a council home, including council owned temporary accommodation, can attend their Local Housing Forum. At these meetings, you can take part in discussions with council officers and Councilors' on a wide range of housing related topics and policy decisions.

- b) **Tenant and homeowner forums** - The tenants' forum focuses on tenant specific issues and the homeowners' forum focuses on homeowner specific issues. Members of both the tenant and homeowner forums meet regularly to look at issues which affect both tenants and homeowners.
- c) **Tenants and residents association (TRA)** – A TRA is a group of residents who come together to work with the council and hold the housing and other services accountable to ensure a consistently high level of service for local residents. You can get more information on how to set up a new TRA by emailing [resident.participation@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:resident.participation@southwark.gov.uk)
- d) **Tenant management organisation (TMO)** – The right to manage regulations 2012 give tenants the framework for taking on the direct management responsibilities for agreed services set out in a management agreement with the council. To take over management, the tenants must set up a properly constituted organisation. More information on TMOs can be found by clicking on the link <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/housing/housing-getting-involved/tenant-management-organisations-tmos>
- e) **The building safety residents' board** - The building safety residents' board plays a critical role in facilitating regular and open communication between the service and residents. The law requires each in-scope building to have its own residents' engagement strategy and to build a profile for each building, taking into account the demographic details of the residents.
- f) **Repairs Improvement Residents' Board** -The repairs service improvement plan was agreed by Cabinet outlining the council's vision for a service that:
- Consistently gets repairs completed right first time
  - Responds to the needs of residents
  - Grows the council's own workforce
  - Works with local suppliers to help boost the local economy
  - Achieve the very best value for money

The role of the board is to scrutinise the repairs service improvement plan including:

- Implementation and forecasts
  - Provide transparency and conversation about the service and key performance indicators (KPI's)
  - Provide residents with a voice to influence change.
- g) **Postal surveys-** Postal surveys are also used to facilitate resident participation. Survey questionnaires are sent out in pre-paid envelopes for residents to complete and return.
- h) **Joint estate inspections** - Joint estate inspections with officers and contractors of the council offer residents the chance to make sure their estate is clean, safe and well cared for. Residents are able to hold officers/contractors directly accountable for the cleaning, grounds maintenance and communal repairs on the estates.
- i) **Housing and community safety scrutiny commission** - This commission is a sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and has been established to examine and monitor the performance of services provided by the Council and other agencies in matters regarding housing and community safety. Elected members and residents constitute the commission. The individual meeting recordings can be reached on the meeting pages and are hosted on the Council's YouTube channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/southwarkcouncil/>
- j) **Online residents' panel** – the online residents' panel enables residents to get involved in decisions remotely and can choose from a list of topics or decisions they want to be involved in, complete online surveys, comment on draft documents. Additional information on how to join the online panel can be found via this link <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/housing/housing-getting-involved/online-residents-panel>
- k) **Resident scrutiny panel** – The purpose of the resident led scrutiny panel is to provide an independent scrutiny of the service and to assist with drawing up an action plan to ensure the service meets the needs and aspirations of residents. The panel is independent and they choose the service they want to scrutinise. Training is provided to panel members who are recruited using

various online tools, face to face contacts during home visits by tenants and homeowner involvement officers, telephone contacts with the customer contact centre and other events organised for residents.

- l) **Surveys-** The Regulator of Social Housing has developed tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) to determine and benchmark social housing landlords against the consumer standards published by the regulator. The TSMs will cover five themes: repairs, building safety, respectful and helpful engagement, managing complaints and responsible neighbourhood management. Perception surveys will be used to measure resident satisfaction with the service.
- m) **Block representatives**  
Some residents are happy to assume responsibility for inspecting and reporting any service issues to the Resident Services Officer as well as the Resident Services Manager for their specific block. Block representatives help to keep the blocks clean and safe by reporting communal repairs, lift breakdowns and other issues to the council.
- n) **Focus groups** - Focus groups offer an opportunity to be consulted on housing service issues like fire safety, repairs, anti-social behaviour, new homes, youth engagement etc. The tenant and homeowner involvement officers provide support to these groups to facilitate resident involvement.
- o) **Social media and digital media platforms** - The pandemic has witnessed the innovative use of digital technology to bring people together in a way that was less utilised before the pandemic. Most of the residents are now increasingly using WhatsApp messenger to monitor estate services. The strategy would seek to optimise the use of digital engagement to spot and leverage social media trends. The strategy also seeks to broaden the reach of content and effectively use audience segmentation to target under-represented groups to ensure their views are captured in the design and delivery of landlord services.
- p) **Co-design workshops with residents** – co-design workshops with topics or issues decided by residents provide a valuable tool to engage residents on single or multiple issues relating to the service. Co-design workshops help with discussions on how

services can improve. This will be increasingly utilised to get the perception of residents on specific services and how to improve the service and make it more accountable to residents.

- q) **Individual interviews** – one to one interviews also provide an opportunity for resident participation.
- r) **Work with community champions to build trust and inspire confidence** – collaborative partnership with community leaders helps to tap into existing social networks which can form the basis for meaningful engagement especially with close knit hard to reach communities.
- s) **Webinars with questions and answer sessions** – webinars give the opportunity to reach residents with smart devices. Residents are able to listen or watch the broadcast at their own time and place and the on-demand flexibility means residents are able to access the sessions multiple times.
- t) **Resident conferences with contents determined by residents** – resident conferences offer an opportunity for residents to hold service providers accountable for the services provided. The workshops, question and answer sessions offer an opportunity to probe key service areas and the resulting action plans with target completion dates helps to make the service accountable to residents.
- u) **Digital inclusion** - Southwark Council is committed to being a digitally inclusive borough, where all residents and businesses have access to the digital tools they need to live and work. Access to high speed broadband is an important part of the council's Fairer Future promise to build a strong local economy for everyone. Training Officers currently provide support for digital training for residents in designated resource centers. More information on digital inclusion can be found via this link (<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/housing/housing-getting-involved/better-broadband-for-southwark>)

- v) **Resident day events and other community activities** – Resident day events are a good way of bringing the community together. These are normally held in the spring and summer months and offer the opportunity for tenants and leaseholders to meet directly with officers of the council and ward members.
  
- w) **Themed cultural events to promote inclusivity and diversity** – themed events which celebrate the diversity of the communities are proving to be popular with residents. These events celebrate the beauty in diversity and extol cultural values as well as celebrate the richness of every culture through food, dress and music.
  
- x) **Home visits by tenants and homeowner involvement officers (THIOs)** – THIOs carry out home visits as part of the strategy to build effective relationships with residents. During the visits, THIOs will encourage residents to talk about their perceptions of the housing service and seek to recruit them to the formal consultative structures as well as the other alternative engagement bodies.
  
- y) **Sporting activities and other games** – sports and other games have proved to be a very useful method of bringing diverse communities together and cuts across every age.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3** – Providing flexible and adaptable mechanisms for residents to scrutinise the design and delivery of landlord services.

The White Paper and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 strengthens the accountability of the council as a landlord for providing safe homes, quality services and treating residents fairly and with respect. The new consumer standards impose legal obligations on the council as a landlord to provide homes that are of a good quality, safe, decent and well-maintained. There is also a requirement to treat residents fairly and with respect. To achieve this, the council as a landlord must listen to residents and provide flexible and adaptable mechanisms for residents to scrutinise the design and delivery of landlord services.

The repairs improvement residents' board and the building safety residents' board, for example, play a critical role in facilitating regular and open communication between the service and residents. The residents' voice is required to support building management in making decisions that impact upon the safety of the building as well as ensuring residents continue to live in well-maintained homes. The law requires each in-scope building to have its own residents' engagement strategy and to build a profile for each building, taking into account the demographic details of the residents.

The tenants and residents associations, the local housing forums and the tenant and homeowner forums provide a framework to residents to hold the council as accountable for all landlord services.

#### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 – Embracing and embedding equality and diversity in line with the principles of Southwark Stands Together**

Southwark Stands Together is a borough wide initiative in response to the killing of George Floyd, the injustice and racism experienced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and the inequalities exposed by Covid-19 and exacerbated by the current cost of living crisis.

As a landlord, we recognise that we work in diverse communities and that some groups are likely to experience disadvantage and discrimination because of a protected characteristic. Our communities are our greatest strength and the lived and learned experiences of residents are invaluable in designing and delivering vibrant and sustainable neighbourhoods.

The council remains committed to knowing who our residents are and what their needs are in order to provide appropriate accessible services. We will do this by:

- a) Providing funding to support themed co-designed events in local communities to facilitate the participation of minority ethnic groups.

- b) Targeted visits and phone calls to individual Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents to discuss the benefits of resident involvement and work with each individual to address any barriers or challenges they face that prevents them from engaging.
- c) Targeted community leadership training, development and capacity building of Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents.
- d) Creating mentoring and networking opportunities with established Black, Asian and minority ethnic community leaders.
- e) Home visits and phone calls to Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities residents by tenants and home owner involvement officers (THIOs) using the data from Northgate.
- f) Themed cultural events to celebrate diversity and inclusion.

## **OUR RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT AGREEMENT**

We have developed seven “Involvement Promises” which form our Resident Involvement Agreement to residents to demonstrate our commitment to achieving the draft strategic resident involvement priorities. These are:

- a) We will publish a strategy (a plan setting direction and actions) every 4 years detailing our approach to carrying out resident involvement. We will consult with residents about whether the right things are included in the strategy.
- b) We will involve residents in making decisions that will affect them.
- c) We will offer a menu of choices to get involved with options to suit different lifestyles and meet the needs of individuals.
- d) We will support new and existing residents’ groups including grant funding.
- e) We will offer training and development support to help residents influence our services.
- f) We will provide a range of opportunities for residents to monitor and scrutinise our performance and services.
- g) We will report back to residents on the difference their involvement has made.

## **DEALING WITH DISPUTES**

Successful resident involvement is about partnership working in order to find the best possible solutions to any issues that arise. However, disputes between landlords and residents’ groups can occur from time to time. If a resident feels that the council has not kept to the resident involvement agreement, they may make a complaint using the complaints procedure. If dispute resolution



becomes necessary, we will make independent advice available through a national tenant participation consultancy to a residents' group. If required, we will also consider engaging the services of an independent mediator to deal with any disputes.

## **MONITORING OUTCOMES AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS**

We will continue to use the Southwark TRAs, the on-line panel and other involvement structures as key groups to monitor the delivery of this resident involvement strategy. We will also report to the Departmental Management Team (DMT) Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Cabinet member for Council Homes and Homelessness and will include features on a regular basis through our website and in the 'Engage' Resident Involvement newsletter.

## **ANNUAL REVIEW**

Each year we will produce information which reports on how well we are meeting the aims of this resident involvement strategy. This information will detail the influence residents have had on business and service improvements and what has changed as a result. This information will be scrutinised by the resident involvement structures, senior managers and councillors.

The evaluation of resident involvement can be complex, as many outcomes cannot be measured in terms of numbers or finance. Also some outcomes do not show themselves immediately but take place over time. Therefore the views, opinions and perceptions of staff, councillors and residents all need to be taken into account to assess the level of influence residents have had and whether this has resulted in the expected continuous improvement over the life of this strategy.

## **MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS**

We will measure the success of this four-year Resident Involvement Strategy by measuring our performance against the following outcomes:

- a) We will have a wider range of residents involved in a greater number of involvement activities through the life of this strategy.
- b) We will have clear evidence that involvement has made a difference in terms of tangible service improvements.
- c) Resident Involvement is embedded and forms part of the day job for all staff and the evidence is collected through the tenant satisfaction measures and survey of homeowners.
- d) We will have achieved improved resident satisfaction with resident involvement.

## **ROAD MAP**

1. The first stage was to review the existing literature, engage with a small sample of 650 residents and produce the draft resident involvement strategy, October 2022 to July 2023.
2. The second stage is to embark upon a wider consultation exercise, listen and learn from residents, November 2023 to March 2024 and produce a revised resident involvement strategy.
3. The third stage is to develop the strategy, test the findings with residents between April 2024 to June 2024 and submit the final draft strategy to residents.
4. The final stage is to launch the strategy in August 2024.
5. We will use the agreed formal consultation mechanisms as well as other informal structures to ensure the views of residents are firmly embedded in the final resident involvement strategy.

<b>Meeting Name:</b>	Housing, Community Safety and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission
<b>Date:</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
<b>Report title:</b>	The Draft Resident Involvement Strategy, Support for Tenants' and Residents Associations (TRAs) and Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>	All
<b>Classification:</b>	Open
<b>Reason for lateness (if applicable):</b>	No
<b>From:</b>	Hakeem Osinaike – Strategic Director of Housing

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. That the Scrutiny Commission note the draft resident involvement strategy for discussion (see appendix 1).
2. The Scrutiny Commission also notes for discussion how the council, as a landlord, is supporting TRAs and TMOs.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3. The principal aim of the co-produced draft resident involvement strategy with residents is to put residents at the heart of everything we do as a landlord, empower communities to shape the places they live in and make decisions about the issues that affect their lives.
4. We want to collaborate with all residents to design the services we provide and to support local people to deliver for their communities and neighbourhoods. The draft resident involvement strategy has been put together through pro-active contacts with over five hundred residents who live in council homes across the borough (see appendix 1).
5. As a people powered council and landlord, it is critical that we listen to the voice of residents and weave their views and perceptions into designing and delivering a landlord service that meets the needs and aspirations of residents.
6. The draft resident involvement strategy was developed with over five hundred residents before the Regulator of Social Housing inspected the council as landlord on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2024. The Regulator has since the inspection provided some preliminary feedback on the resident involvement structure, set out below:

- Our tenant engagement structure is good, and we invest significant resources to support resident involvement in a range of formal and informal resident involvement activities. However, there was no evidence to illustrate how the significant resources invested in resident involvement is supporting residents to influence and scrutinize housing management strategies, policies and the design and delivery of landlord services.
- A lot more needs to be done to demonstrate how resident scrutiny and feedback is positively leading to the improvements in the standard and quality of all landlord services and improving the satisfaction levels of all residents with the landlord and housing management service.
- The council as a landlord needs to demonstrate with a clear implementation plan how it is embedding the voice of tenants in the design and delivery of all landlord services and how residents hold the council as a landlord service to account. This includes empowerment and capacity building of residents through meaningful and relevant training, so residents have the tools and knowledge to challenge the performance of the council meaningfully and robustly for the standard and quality of the landlord services.
- There is ample evidence to illustrate that the council as a landlord is committed to the growth and development of Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs). There is very clear and demonstrable evidence of the benefits TMOs in delivering good landlord services in the local neighbourhoods. However, more work needs to be done to ensure TMOs fulfil their obligations in the Modular Management Agreements (MMAs). The council needs to develop a more accountable framework for monitoring compliance with the MMAs and addressing the governance weaknesses in TMOs.
- The landlord service performance information is not easily accessible on the website. The website is not user friendly, and it is difficult to navigate to locate performance information about the council as a landlord. Tenants believe performance information is positively portrayed and tenants have not been able to scrutinize the service and interrogate the performance data before it is published.
- The performance information needs to be easily accessible by all tenants, so they can monitor the performance of the council as a landlord. The website needs to be equipped with interactive digital engagement tools and other online forms so residents can give feedback on the standard and quality of the housing management service.
- The online presence and the interactive tools embedded in websites provide more flexible opportunities for residents to participate in the design and delivery of landlord services as well as a useful feedback tool for recording their experiences of the service.

7. The formal judgement of the Regulator of Social Housing is yet to be published but the informal feedback from the Regulator of Social Housing is quite instructive and we now need to include potential changes in the resident involvement structure as part of the consultation.
8. It is critical to note that this is a draft strategy, and the idea is that it can form the basis for a much wider consultation and discussion with all residents who live in council homes and facilitated by an independent specialist tenants' and residents' advisory service.
9. The draft resident engagement strategy has been benchmarked with other local authorities (Lambeth, Brent, Newham, and Hackney) and independently reviewed by the Tenant Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS) the engagement experts who wrote, "**The strategy is written in a way that is easy to follow; to understand and is not jargonistic. This is certainly one of the better and more effective strategies I have seen from the Social Housing Sector, so well done.**"

### **TRAs AND TMOs**

10. TRAs and TMOs play a pivotal role in helping the council as a landlord to design and deliver effective and efficient housing management and landlord services.
11. TRA's in Southwark Council homes are normally unincorporated bodies run by and representing all residents in the TRA areas of benefit. TRAs normally exist to represent the interest of their members and provide a platform for residents to meet regularly to consider issues that touch and concern the standard of local landlord services.
12. TMO's on the other hand are incorporated bodies run by secure tenants and council leaseholders to deliver housing management and other landlord services on behalf of the Council. The Housing Act 1985 (s27AB) makes provision for the council as a landlord to enter into management agreements with TMOs. TMOs are governed by the requirements of the Right to Manage Regulations 2012 and contractual arrangements with the council under their management agreements.
13. The council pays each TMO management and maintenance allowances to fulfill the management responsibilities set out in the management agreements. TMO's are therefore required by law to operate in accordance with both their contractual and regulatory arrangements.
14. There currently 128 active TRAs in all wards of the council which is a significant increase from 57 active TRAs in 2022 (see appendix 2). There are currently 16 TMOs in 12 wards (see appendix 3).
15. The extensive network of 128 TRAs are actively involved in holding local landlord services to account. There are also successful TRAs that only draw their membership from residents who live in street properties, for example Grosvenor TRA in Camberwell and Surrey Gardens TRA in Walworth. This

model is being studied and work is now underway to replicate it across the borough.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **THE DRAFT RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY**

16. There have been significant changes in both the legal and regulatory framework in the way social housing is managed since the cabinet report in February 2020. The Hackitt report into building safety, the Social Housing White Paper, the Building Safety Act 2022, and the new Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 require landlords to put accountable structures in place to ensure the voice of residents is firmly embedded in the way landlord services are designed, delivered, and managed.
17. The pandemic witnessed increased creativity in grassroots resident involvement and a more integrated approach in service design and delivery. The creative use of WhatsApp by residents, Facebook live streams, interactive phone engagement, the acceleration of digital engagement via Microsoft Teams or Zoom, all suggest the need to amplify the menu for resident involvement. The evidence also highlights the need for capacity building, training and co-creation with community leaders and residents to deliver a modern resident involvement framework fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
18. The legal and regulatory changes define the way landlords must make their services accountable to residents. This, coupled with the need for digital urgency and increased creativity in resident involvement, all provide the right environment to collaborate with residents to develop a new resident involvement strategy.
19. There is also a need to review our resident involvement structures to reflect not only the values and objectives of Southwark Stands together, but also to harness the power of neighborhood led services, narrowing the gap for those more vulnerable members of our community and to deliver resident led outcomes to improve the quality of life for all residents in line with the vision and principles of the Southwark 2030.
20. The current resident involvement strategy was developed in 2013 (see appendix 4). A refresh is now needed due to the significant developments in the law and the regulatory framework since that time. The new laws impose new statutory obligations on the council as a landlord to engage with residents and ensure their views are weaved into housing strategy and key decision-making.

## DRAFT STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### 21. **There are four priorities that underpin our draft resident involvement strategy based on the proactive contact surveys with residents:**

- Giving power to residents to shape their neighbourhoods' and estates.
- A wide range of involvement opportunities for residents to have a say in decision-making and development of policy and strategy.
- Providing flexible and adaptable mechanisms for residents to scrutinise the design and delivery of landlord services.
- Embracing and embedding equality and diversity in line with the principles of Southwark Stands Together

### 22. To achieve the key strategic priorities, the strategy sets out a method to measure tenant satisfaction levels that are verified by residents and assessed by the Regulator of Social Housing. Residents will:

- Define the service.
- Set service standards.
- Monitor the service.
- Review the service using the GAP analysis framework.

### 23. The draft strategy sets out the bespoke options for residents to be involved in delivering landlord services as well as harnessing the knowledge, skill, lived and learned experiences of residents through the community power model to co-design and co-produce solutions to complex neighbourhood challenges.

### 24. The draft strategy is an attempt to capture the voice of residents who want repairs to their homes to be prioritised, clean and safe neighbourhoods and ensuring that all our homes, including new homes that we build, are sustainable, energy efficient and affordable.

## **HOW WE ARE GOING TO DEVELOP THE STRATEGY – THE CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK AND ROADMAP**

### 25. The first stage was to review the existing literature, engage with a small sample of residents (533) and produce the draft resident involvement strategy.

### 26. The second stage is to collaborate with residents to appoint a specialist independent tenants' and residents' advisory service through the council's procurement framework to embark upon a wider consultation exercise, listen and learn from residents.

27. The third and final stages would be to develop the strategy with residents, test the findings with residents and launch the strategy.
28. We will use the agreed formal consultation mechanisms as well as other informal structures to ensure the views of residents are firmly embedded in the final resident involvement strategy. We will remain very open-minded throughout the consultation exercise to ensure every view is captured in the feedback. An indicative timeline is set out below and the detail is provided in (appendix 5)
- **Stage 1** Research and produce the draft resident involvement strategy (Getting the initial views) **(August 2022 to December 2024)**
  - **Stage 2 Appoint** a specialist independent tenants' and residents' advisory service with residents through the council's governance procurement process (Engage residents, listen and learn) Plan and deliver resident engagement activities to consult on the draft resident involvement strategy using the formal resident consultation framework, informal consultation mechanisms and digital platforms **(January 2025 to February 2025)**
  - **Stage 3** Develop the strategy, evaluate the findings with residents and launch the new resident involvement strategy. **(March 2025 to April 2025).**
29. We will follow the footfall and embed the team in the community to listen to what residents have to say and learn from those conversations. We will make sure every contact matters, every resident has an opportunity to make their voices heard.
30. New skills set around building relationships with residents which require more positive energy, spending more time with residents, demonstrating care, and taking responsibility for the things that matter to residents and jointly producing action plans to improve landlord services will underpin this strategy.
31. Resident Involvement Officers will be inserted and embedded in the local communities, door knocking and building relationships with residents at the doorstep or over a cup of tea or coffee and genuinely engaging with residents to find out the things that matter to them and how we can work collaboratively to make things happen for local residents.
32. The team will also be doing some weekend working delivering community cohesion activities jointly with residents. Any costs will be covered within the existing resident involvement budget.

### **SUPPORT FOR TRAs BY THE COUNCIL AS A LANDLORD**

33. The key strategic approach for supporting and growing the network of TRAs is set out in the Southwark Council Delivery Plan 2022 to 2026 (see appendix 6). The key driver is to create a peopled powered Southwark. The Cabinet decision in February 2020 set out a framework to put resources back into the



local communities and to empower residents to make local decisions on how to use the allocated resident involvement funds to improve landlord service.

34. TRAs are the bedrock for the communities they serve, and the council provides training to equip residents with the skills required to run effective TRAs. TRAs are supported by the council to hold local landlord service providers to account. This is illustrated at the monthly joint estate and grounds maintenance inspections. Local TRA representatives' conduct an average of 2300 joint estate inspections per annum.
35. TRAs are also supported to send representatives to the repairs improvement residents' board (RIRB) to improve the repairs and maintenance service. There is ongoing work to hold repairs action days on none TRA estates to engage more residents and grow the number of TRAs.
36. The community gardening projects made of up residents who initially had a passion just for gardening has now led to the development of new TRAs on the Goschen, Dowles and Melford estates.
37. TRAs are also supported to be continually active in new housing developments and regeneration as witnessed on the Tustin and Aylesbury Estates. TRAs further act as effective ambassadors for building and fire safety issues on behalf of residents as witnessed on the Ledbury Estate.
38. The pandemic witnessed increased creativity in grassroots resident involvement and a more integrated approach to service design and delivery of landlord and other council services with TRAs and TMOs. This grassroots collaborative partnership with TMOs and TRAs has been further employed to identify vulnerable residents to access energy subsidy payments during winter.
39. A total of 8 TRAs converted their TRA halls into warm hubs during the winter months of 2023/24 serving hot food and drinks and the Albrighton Community fridge illustrates the tangible benefits of community power in providing practical support with the nutritional needs of local communities. A total of £50K has been set aside to support TRAs who want to set up warm hubs in the winter months of 2024/25 to support residents with the cost of living.
40. TRAs and TMOs possess a wealth of local knowledge which has helped officers to deliver estate management services. TRAs conduct about 2300 joint estate inspections every year alongside officers and contractors. The walkabouts identify communal repairs, grounds maintenance issues, fly tipping and further gives tenants the opportunity to talk about their homes and tenancy issues. This is also a good listening opportunity to the issues that matter to tenants and by involving other teams on these walkabouts, has served to further illustrate a one-council approach to resident involvement.
41. The involvement of TRAs in projects that bring tangible benefits to their local communities has also helped to develop more meaningful relationships between residents and local TRAs and added more value to the TRA movement. Public Health has teamed up with the Housing Department to allocate £150K to three TRA areas (Rockingham, Wyndam & Comber and Kingswood) to help address some of the long-term health and well-being

impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the borough's population. The selection of these three estates was informed by Public Health data.

42. TRAs have also been instrumental in setting up project support groups to ensure the voice of residents is firmly embedded in the management of major work projects especially to put things right. The work to address some of the challenges with delivering major works on Canada Water and Kirby Estates serves to illustrate the growing influence of TRAs and the one-to-one support offered by TRA members to affected residents. The TRAs were very instrumental in setting up the project support groups which has helped to improve the relationship with the Council as a landlord.
43. The work of [We Walworth](#) is supported by a number of TRA residents who were key to connecting residents with critical services and facilitating access to food at the height of the pandemic. This collaborative approach to addressing community issues has facilitated the return of an outdoor eating and hot plates area at Burgess Park, an activity that was banned because of fire safety concerns and anti-social behavior, amongst other things. The trial launch was on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2024 with free food and drinks which contributed to reactivating community links and harps to the power of food, music, and sports in bringing communities together.

### **RESOURCES FOR TRA DEVELOPMENT AND WIDER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

44. Encouraging and funding TRAs has also helped with the growth of TRAs. The budget for resident participation is a little over £900k per annum and TRAs have a core funding budget of £178K per annum to set up new TRAs and maintain existing ones.
45. An additional strategy to amplify the methods of resident engagement is the get involved grant (GIG) funding which is open to TRAs and other constituted and unconstituted local group of residents who live in council homes. The GIG activities help to bring communities together and serve as recruitment fares for TRAs.
46. The Southwark Black Parents Forum (SBPF) has collaborated with TRAs across the borough to host community events on council estates and council parks which have attracted an average of 1000 residents. These activities have helped to reactivate and strengthen TRAs and improved the diversity of the TRA committees. More information on the various collaborative partnerships between SBPF can be found on the SBPF website [Southwark Black Parents Forum](#)

### **EMPOWERMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

47. The resident involvement team has been restructured to align the service with modern ways of resident involvement and the new social housing regulatory requirements. There is also a much greater focus in the new structure on amplifying resident led oversight and scrutiny of all landlord services and to widen the range of opportunities for TRAs and the diversity of tenants' voice to shape and deliver the housing management and landlord services.

48. The change will devote more staffing resources to grassroots resident involvement by proactively embarking on a range of people powered community activities to encourage wider resident involvement opportunities based on the principle of “go where the tenants are”, the [We Walworth](#) and [Southwark Black Parents Forum](#) models. These models proactively engage the residents on the issues that matter to residents. The sharing of food, the power of sports and music are deployed to encourage community participation.
49. The proposed changes in the resident involvement team will embrace the benefits of digital technology and social media platforms to meet the needs of residents who have asked for more flexible and inclusive ways to voice their views and make meaningful contributions to the improvement of landlord services. A project is underway to distribute 80 new laptops to 80 TRAs to improve digital access to landlord services for residents. The laptops have been procured and are being delivered to TRAs.
50. As part of embedding the new social housing regulatory framework for the transparency, influence and accountability consumer standard, the housing department is in the process of recruiting tenants to the resident led housing strategy, policy and procedures board. The board will formalise the existing roles of TRAs in assessing landlord services and holding the housing department to account.

### **SUPPORT FOR TMOs**

51. The Housing Act 1985 (s27AB) makes provision for the Council as a landlord to enter into management agreements with TMOs. TMOs are governed by the requirements of the Right to Manage Regulations 2012 and contractual arrangements with the council under their management agreements. There are currently 16 TMOs managing 4104 council homes of which 1413 council homeowners and 2691 are council tenants (see paragraph 59).
52. TMOs play a pivotal role in delivering good landlord services and the aggregate of the tenant satisfaction measures collected illustrates the added value that TMOs bring to improving satisfaction levels with landlord services in TMO managed council homes. TMO tenants recorded much higher satisfaction levels in the latest tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) when compared to tenants for whom the council provides direct landlord services.
53. TMOs empower council tenants and leaseholders to get involved in making decisions about the homes and estates they manage in the 12 wards. The TMOs have boards or management committees who provide governance. The tenants and council homeowners can hold the TMO to account for the standard and quality of the landlord services.
54. The tenants and leaseholders in the area of benefit of the TMO are given the opportunity at the annual general meeting of the TMO and every 5 years to vote for the TMO to continue to directly deliver the landlord services. Management committee members or boards are also elected at the annual general meetings of the TMO.

55. If the tenants and leaseholders are not happy with the performance of the TMO in the wards, they can vote to end the management for the council homes served by the TMO and the council will resume the direct delivery of landlord services following the provisions in the management agreement to end the management contract. The annual and 5 yearly cycle of votes give tenants and leaseholders in wards by managed TMO greater voice on who delivers the landlord services and enhances democratic accountability of the TMO to the residents.
56. The TMOs further conduct community meetings and workshops which give more opportunities for residents to ask questions, scrutinise the service and benchmark with other TMOs in other wards. The TMO offices are based within proximity of the council homes they manage which helps with access to services and a more customised landlord service delivery in the wards TMOs serve.
57. TMOs in the various wards are supported to ensure the boards and management committees represent the diverse groups in the council homes and wards they serve. This has helped in ensuring the needs of the different demographics are understood by the TMOs and this is regularly monitored by the TMO Development and Monitoring Officers.
58. TMOs are supported by the council with resources to provide training for residents in the various wards to enhance their skills, financial literacy and how to govern a TMO. The committees decide on spending priorities for the surplus funds generated by TMOs and several TMOs have invested the budget surpluses generated from the efficient management of their estates and areas of benefit in improving green spaces, playgrounds or community activities to improve quality of life for residents.

### **TMO MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCES**

59. The last review of the TMO allowances was in 2020 (which informed the 2021/22 allowances) and so there was no need for a fundamental review of the recharges for 2024/25. The current allowances in 2024/25 is based on the 2023/24 allowance, adjusted slightly for property sales.

TMO	Council homeowners	Council tenants	Total council homes	Allowance 24-25 (£)
Applegarth	16	37	53	77,790
Brenchley Gardens	52	43	95	114,261
Browning	162	334	496	653,816
Cooper Close	48	15	63	47,602
Delawyck	64	51	115	86,699
D'Eynsford	121	215	336	344,050
Falcon Point	62	48	110	175,281
Gloucester	83	335	418	568,241

Haddon Hall	68	101	169	233,406
KPH	21	19	40	57,983
Styles	16	32	48	67,755
Two Towers	61	104	165	204,198
Webber & Quentin	63	100	163	175,870
Willowbrook	42	137	179	256,364
Wrayburn	35	37	72	76,813
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>914</b>	<b>1608</b>	<b>2522</b>	<b>3,140,129</b>

TMO	Council homeowners	Council tenants	Total council homes	Allowance 24-25
Leathermarket JMB	499	1083	1582	Self-financing

60. There are significant challenges facing local governments nationally and the council as a landlord specifically. The strain on the housing revenue account (HRA) and general fund is palpable. The central government decision in 2015 to reduce rents by 1% for 4 years reduced the size of the HRA in Southwark by £60 million.
61. The compelling need to make council homes safe post-Grenfell and the urgency of tackling mould and damp is a source of constant consternation for delivering a good landlord service. This is further exacerbated by the pressure on the general fund to pay for temporary accommodation, especially as the local housing allowance has not kept track with the private sector market rents and residents turn to the council to seek rehousing assistance.
62. Advice from the council's resources department is that due to the precarious state of HRA finances and the cost minimisation measures introduced under the moratorium, all LB Southwark retained service areas are subject to a cash limit, broadly equating to a 6% reduction on 2023/24.
63. The HRA is limited in the increases in rent it can apply and furthermore, in 2023/24 the rents were capped at 7% whereas both general and repair/building inflation rates have increased at a significantly higher rate. This is coupled with much higher interest rates which increases the cost of borrowing, which then impacts on the revenue monies available to the HRA. The council has an HRA budget recovery plan in place to ensure the future viability of the HRA. This financial position is a driver for the calculation of future TMO allowance uplifts.
64. The TMOs have asked for an allowance review via the Southwark Tenant Management Organisation Committee (STMOC) and as required by law, the TMOs will appoint an independent advisor and notify the council.

### **Policy framework implications**

65. The Council plan and the housing strategy have a commitment to empower residents to make local decisions on landlord services and TMOs and TRAs

give power to residents to design and local landlord services and to hold landlord services to account.

### **Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts**

#### **Community impact statement**

66. TMOs continue to record very high levels of resident satisfaction with the local landlord services. TMOs further conduct community meetings and workshops which give more opportunities for residents to ask questions, scrutinise the service and benchmark with other TMOs in other wards.
67. The TMO offices are based within proximity of the council homes they manage which helps with access to services and a more customised landlord service delivery in the wards TMOs serve.
68. TRAs are the bedrock for the communities they serve and the growing influential network of TRAs has helped facilitate the fostering of vibrant and cohesive communities.

#### **People powered Southwark impact assessment.**

69. Well-run and governed TMOs and TRAs demonstrate the commitment of the council to empower residents to run local landlord services and hold the council as a landlord to account for the design and delivery of local services.

#### **Impact on neighbourhoods**

70. TMOs and TRAs offer more flexible and inclusive ways of involving residents in the design and delivery of landlord services. This includes empowerment and capacity-building opportunities, so residents are equipped to deliver local services to transform their neighbourhoods.

#### **Closing the gap**

71. The March 2021 census revealed multiple levels of deprivation in the Borough and TMO and TRA funding helps to address the indices of social and economic deprivation by equipping residents with saleable skills to manage local services for local communities.

#### **Health impact statement**

72. TMO and TRA services are locally based, and the social and community cohesion activities help to promote the health and well-being of residents. The summer funday activities and the Christmas events help to prevent loneliness and promote the mental well-being of residents.

#### **Climate change implications**

73. There are no adverse climate change implications as TMO offices and TRA halls are locally accessible, and no car or bus journeys are required

to access the local TMO offices or TRA halls.

### **Resource implications**

74. The plans set out to improve the financial governance of TMOs has the potential to ensure that TMO allowances are correctly used for the purposes intended. The empowerment and capacity building of TRAs requires that adequate resources are allocated to continue to grow the network of TRAs.

### **Financial implications**

75. There are currently 16 TMOs managing 4104 Council homes. The allocated management and maintenance allowances for the delegated landlord services provided by 15 none self-financing TMOs in 2024/25 is £3,140,129.00 Leathermarket JMB is self-financing.
76. It is important that the management accounts for TMOs are scrutinised to ensure they deliver value for money services and the allocated funds are used for the purposes set out in the management agreements.

### **Legal implications**

77. TMOs derive their legal and regulatory framework from section 27 of the Housing Act 1985 and the Right to Manage Regulations 2012 [The Housing \(Right to Manage\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)
78. The Modular Management Agreement (MMA) sets out the regulatory framework for the delegated responsibilities for each TMO.

### **Consultation**

79. Not applicable

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Head of Procurement**

80. Not applicable

Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance

(Ref: DG 14/11/2024)

81. The relevant statutory and regulatory framework is referenced in the body of the report. The Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance and her staff will be able to advise officers on any legal and governance matters arising from development of the strategy.

Strategic Director, Resources

(Ref: H&M 24/047)

82. The Strategic Director, Resources notes the content of the report and endorses the proposed restructuring of the Resident Involvement Team to strengthen financial oversight of TMO's to address shortcomings identified through recent audit reviews. The Strategic Director, Resources also notes the requirement to review allowances for 2025-26, which needs to be seen within the context of the wider financial position of the HRA and the budget recovery measures put in place to ensure its continued sustainability.

### Other officers

83. Not applicable





### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

84. Not applicable






### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Not applicable		

### APPENDICES

No.	Title
<p><b>Appendix 1</b></p>  <p>240522_THIO Resident contact form</p>  <p>Document in SCRUTINY REPORT D</p>	Draft Resident Involvement Strategy
<p><b>Appendix 2</b></p>  <p>TRAs by Resident Involvement Officer.xl</p>	Active and being reactivated TRAs by Resident Involvement Officer
<p><b>Appendix 3</b></p>  <p>TMOs BY WARD SCRUTINY MEETING 2</p>	TMOs by Ward



<p><b>Appendix 4</b></p>  <p>IDM Report - Resident Involvement</p>  <p>Appendix 1 - RI Strategy.doc</p>  <p>2015- 2017 - RIS AP - AP_v3.doc</p>	Resident involvement strategy 2013
<p><b>Appendix 5</b></p>  <p>DRAFT RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRA1</p>	Draft Resident involvement strategy consultation framework
<p><b>Appendix 6</b></p>  <p>Southwark Council Delivery Plan 2022 to</p>	Southwark Council Delivery Plan 2022 to 2026

## AUDIT TRAIL

*This section must be included in all reports.*

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Hakeem Osinaike, Strategic Director of Housing	
<b>Report Author</b>	Nat. Stevens, Resident Involvement Manager	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> November 2024	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director, Finance	Yes	Yes
List other officers here		
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> November 2024	