

<b>Item No.</b> 13.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 12 September 2023	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet
<b>Report title:</b>		Response to Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Review: Resident Participation Framework	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>Cabinet Member</b>		Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Homes, Communities and Finance	

## **FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR STEPHANIE CRYAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES, COMMUNITIES AND FINANCE**

The recommendations in the mini-review of the Residents’ Participation framework by the Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission are timely and very helpful. Since the implementation of the new Resident Participation structures in 2020 there have been very significant changes in both the legal and regulatory framework in the way social housing. The Hackett 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.

The new structures were put in place during the COVID 19 Pandemic and whilst this meant the council could only hold online meetings, since we have come out of lockdown, we are seeing increased creativity in grass-root resident involvement and a more holistic approach in integrated 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 21st century.

There is now a need to review our resident engagement structures to reflect not only the values and objectives of Southwark Stands together, but also to harness the power of neighbourhood lead services,, narrowing the gap for those more vulnerable members of our community and to deliver genuinely resident lead outcomes to improve the quality of life and community for all.

I thank the Commission for their report and recommendations and for taking time and careful consideration for the way forward. The recommendations will form the basis for a much wider consultation with residents to evaluate the current resident involvement structures and how they will be delivered in the future.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Cabinet note the contents of this report and the response to the recommendations of the Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission mini-review report on the residents' participation framework.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2. In February 2017, Kaizen Partnership and Social Engine were commissioned to look at how the council as a landlord was engaging tenants and homeowners. The outcome of that review informed the cabinet decision in February 2020 to put in place the current resident involvement structures.
3. As these new structures were due to go live, the pandemic struck considerably delaying the start of the new forums and impacting on their effectiveness. The emerging evidence in the post-pandemic era suggests that the new formal resident involvement structures have not translated into the wider and inclusive resident involvement that was envisaged.
4. On the other hand, we have seen a significant increase in the number of residents attending themed community events and activities that bring tangible benefits for residents like repairs estate action days, repairs improvement residents' board, sports, gardening, music, arts, cultural festivals, health and well-being, career fares that bring employers together to support residents.
5. The recommendations of the commission are welcome and a review and evaluation exercise will now be undertaken with residents to probe any current issues with the existing resident involvement framework and offer solutions to design a resident involvement structure that resonates with residents.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

6. The current resident involvement structure was put in place in 2020 and part of the aim was to give a much wider opportunity to all residents living in council housing to participate in the design, delivery and management of council homes. However, the pandemic interrupted the full implementation of the new structure.
7. There are ongoing attempts to embed the new structure in the post-pandemic era. The evidence to date suggests that the new structure has not delivered the wider and inclusive resident involvement that was anticipated and there is more work to be done to achieve this.
8. The 12 recommendations in the mini scrutiny review report into the resident participation framework by the Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission are welcome and will form the basis for a much wider consultation with residents to influence and shape what a modern, robust, flexible, dynamic and inclusive resident involvement framework fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century should look like.

## **Addressing the recommendations from the scrutiny commission:**

### **Recommendation 1**

***The Council should properly explore what can be learnt from the examples of successful engagement and replicated in the Resident Participation Framework. There are processes that are integral to the operation of the Citizens' Jury, the We Walworth project and perhaps other examples of successful community engagement with residents which are transferrable. Many of the practices seen in both the We Walworth project and the use of Citizens' Juries are consistent with the new Regulatory Code for social housing. Furthermore, the new Regulatory Code supports using a range of engagement options – one size does not fit all – and notes that tenant representative structures on their own are not sufficient to ensure a diversity of engagement. Officers should explore and understand how these different methodologies and lessons learnt can be used in the context of the Resident Participation Framework.***

9. This recommendation is accepted and the commission is thanked. The council will explore what can be learnt from the examples of successful residents' involvement. There is anecdotal evidence of successful and effective resident involvement activities in the Borough. It is critical that the tools used, the methodologies deployed are closely studied, the context clearly understood and the reasons for the successful implementation, including available resources, are clearly identified in order to replicate these successful resident involvement activities across the Borough.
10. In a face to face representative survey of 212 residents between September 2022 and July 2023 requested by the cabinet member for council housing, residents expressed varied preferences for resident involvement methods and the quest for community cohesion.
11. The survey data is not comprehensive and a much larger sample of residents is required to make any meaningful conclusion. Work is now underway to consult more widely as part of developing a new resident involvement strategy.
12. However, what this sample illustrates is the strong appetite for the growth and development of tenants and residents associations and themed events that bring tangible benefits for residents like repairs engagement days and other activities that promote inclusivity and diversity.
13. There is also evidence that residents want to be involved in the design and delivery of landlord services and are keen to engage in joint estate inspections, co-designed workshops and willing to act as community champions, resident scrutiny panels such as the repairs improvement residents' board, building safety residents' board. The findings are consistent with the underpinning principles of citizens' juries. The citizens' juries approach is an engagement mechanism that will be included in our future resident involvement strategy.

## Recommendation 2

***In accordance with the recommendation in the 2020 Cabinet Report, the Council should carry out a full evaluation of the Resident Participation Framework introduced. This needs to be a properly resourced proactive exercise carried out at a grass roots level in each individual ward/area. Drawing on the We Walworth model, this could involve street/telephone canvassing, drop in sessions, digital fora, workshops.... to bring people to the table. This process must involve all tenant and leaseholder community leaders as well as community interest groups such as the Southwark Black Parents' Forum, Livesey Exchange, Spring Hub, The Giving Lab, Active Communities Network, Golden Oldies, Elim house, London Seniors, Southwark LGBT Network, Somalia Development Association, Unshackled Duma. This could be facilitated by [Open Communities](#) which currently works with some TRAs.***

14. This is a valuable recommendation. A review of the current resident involvement framework will be included in draft resident involvement strategy. The draft strategy will aim to capture the voice of all residents and deliver against their expectations.
15. The strategy will help to shape the conversation with residents, set 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.
16. The new social housing regulatory framework imposes a number legal obligations on social landlords to put the needs and aspirations of residents at the heart of landlord service design and delivery. 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.

## Recommendation 3

***Equality and Diversity should be at the heart of the Resident Participation Framework. Budget should be set aside for targeted engagement with diverse communities that have lowest turn outs using diverse providers. Acknowledging the findings of earlier research, particular emphasis must also be placed on ensuring age diversity within the engagement processes and structure including individual TRAs, as young people have historically been poorly represented. The process and the eventual outcome must be underpinned by a firm commitment towards data collection, evidence and impact monitoring.***

17. A critical recommendation and again the commission is thanked for their work. The March 2021 census revealed that Southwark is a very diverse borough with 40% of residents born in a country that is not part of the UK, Ireland or the Channel Islands. Just over half (51%) of the population identified as being from

a White ethnic background and about 49% identified as other ethnic minority groups. Young people under the age of 16 represent 15.7% of the population and 39% of the population is between 20 to 39 years of age.

18. The Kaizen/Social Engine report highlighted, amongst other issues, the lack of diversity among members of the formal consultation bodies. The current cohort of chairs and vice chairs of the local housing forums does not reflect the demographic profile of all residents. 71.42% of the local housing forum chairs and vice chairs are White, 57.14% identify as White Male and 28.58% are Black with an average age of over 58.
19. The resident involvement team is working with existing and emerging TRAs and other community organisations to organise more grass root activities to encourage resident involvement and address the under-representation of minority ethnic representation in the leadership roles in local housing forums as well as encouraging age diversity.
20. This is in line with values of Southwark Stands Together and the aim is to address and prevent structural racial inequalities, listen to and amplify the diverse voices of all residents. The key driver is to nurture and create an inclusive, fair and representative voice at both the formal and informal levels of resident involvement and promote equality and diversity.
21. The proposal to set aside a budget for targeted engagement with diverse communities that have lowest turn outs using diverse providers will be part of the resident involvement strategy consultation.

#### **Recommendation 4**

***The Council should set up a Citizens' Jury of residents in council housing – i.e. using the selection process comparable to that employed to select the Citizens' Jury brought together to consider climate change. The use of this model would ensure the selection of a truly representative group of tenants and leaseholders that could consider a variety of matters pertaining to the future development of residents' participation structures and engagement processes, including reimagining and co-designing future development of grass roots involvement and the wider framework. This would bring in a fresh perspective and ensure a diversity of views. As with the Citizens' Jury brought together to consider climate change, selected residents would then work with experts (which may include selected stakeholders) to consider the output of the engagement exercises carried out under Recommendation 2 and develop a set of recommendations for Cabinet as to how the Resident Participation Framework should operate going forward.***

22. This recommendation is welcomed and the consultation on the draft resident involvement strategy would seek to moot the formation of a citizens' jury comprising a diverse and representative range of residents to discuss what a truly representative resident involvement structure should be and make recommendations to the cabinet.

23. The recommendation to seek a fresh perspective on resident involvement facilitated by a team of independent experts and the participation of a group of leaseholders and tenants is accepted.

#### **Recommendation 5**

***In line with recommendations from central government and existing experience of successful community engagement through the Citizens' Jury and the We Walworth project, the council should adopt a system of incentives such as financial reimbursement/remuneration for residents' time.***

24. This recommendation is accepted and my gratitude again to the Commission for its work. It is important that the council continues to recognise and reward residents who volunteer their time to help improve landlord services. Rewards and incentives contribute to building a much stronger relationship with residents and facilitates more collaboration across a diverse range of landlord services.
25. This recommendation will need to be fully reviewed and costed; review will be carried out to inform both the resident involvement strategy and if necessary, the 2024/25 budget challenge sessions.

#### **Recommendation 6**

***Review and put in place a performance framework for all stakeholders who are a part of or have a role in delivering the Resident Participation Framework, in order to get clarity on roles and improve coherence and delivery. As part of this process, all organisations/stakeholders within the framework in receipt of or responsible for managing funds should present verifiable accounts on an annual basis. Organisations receiving larger sums should be required to present fully audited accounts on an annual basis. This will provide transparency and ensure that resources are used more efficiently and that functions and outcomes are neither duplicated nor over-looked.***

26. This recommendation is welcome and the Commission is thanked again for this invaluable guidance. The resident participation fund is funded from the rents and service charges paid by tenants and homeowners. As these are public funds, it is important that all organisations including TRAs and other organisations in receipt and/or responsible for managing allocated resources, present verified accounts annually and those in receipt of substantial amounts provide fully audited accounts annually.
27. There is a key requirement in the Managing Public Money and other Treasury guidance across government and the public sector to promote efficiency, effectiveness and economy in the deployment and use of public money.
28. Accountability, integrity and selflessness are integral part of the Nolan principles in public life and this is in addition to openness, honesty, objectivity and

leadership which requires all those accountable for public funds to model the Nolan principles and hold themselves up to the highest level of scrutiny for managing public resources.

29. The resident involvement fund is part of the Housing Revenue Account and TRA office holders and committees as well as other community interest companies and other voluntary organisations must be held accountable for the funds disbursed to them.

### **Recommendation 7**

***It is recognised that many tenants do not live on estates and that not all estates have functioning TRAs. A list of TRAs needs to be compiled, along with an action plan for establishing TRAs on estates where there is none. The Council should consider, at a grass roots level, how best to expand TRAs, and how best to ensure that residents not living on estates are properly represented.***

30. This recommendation is welcomed as it reinforces a key commitment in the council delivery plan to create thriving and sustainable neighbourhoods and empowering communities to shape the places they live in and make decisions about issues which affect their lives
31. An exercise to map all the estates with TRAs and estates without TRAs as well street properties without TRAs has started. The exercise will provide a comprehensive database which will help to inform and allocate resources for increasing the number of TRAs and support local people to deliver for their community.
32. There is ongoing work to hold repairs action days on none TRA estates to engage more residents and grow the number of TRAs and putting residents at the heart of everything we do.
33. 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. There are plans to replicate this experience in the Great Estates offer.
34. There are a number of 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 closely studied and work is now underway to replicate it across the Borough.
35. Part of the new resident involvement strategy review will further consider how to involve more residents who live in street properties in the design and delivery of landlord services.

## **Recommendation 8**

***Explore how the growth in digital inclusion can improve engagement and provide further training to residents who remain digitally excluded.***

36. There is a compelling need to include the digital offer in the menu for resident involvement and this recommendation is timely and welcomed.
37. The Council's digital inclusion strategy takes a digital-first approach and is a Borough where residents, businesses and staff are supported with digital skills, connectivity and devices, empowering them to participate in the online world. This includes improving resident experiences to allow them to have a seamless digital interaction with the Council.
38. The digital offer will spot and leverage social media trends and opportunities to broaden the reach of content and effectively use audience segmentation and targeting under-represented groups to ensure their views are captured in the design and delivery of landlord services in line with the pledges of Southwark Stands Together.
39. It is a key objective of the Resident Involvement Team to align future resources to ensure that digital engagement tools and offers are developed. The pandemic accelerated the need to make a digital offer to residents and post-pandemic, it is becoming more apparent that a digital offer is critical to adapting our approach to resident involvement in response to the changing needs and complex work patterns and lifestyles of our residents. This includes referring digitally excluded residents to support and training available from the digital inclusion team and acting as digital ambassadors to promote the online offer.
40. Part of the of the Council's digital inclusion strategy is to provide broadband internet connectivity to most TRA halls and upskill residents to be digitally engaged. There is a sharp recognition that with a rising cost of living, some residents may not be able to afford Wi-fi or data and if they do have data, they may prioritise usage for other activities over resident involvement activities with the council. The digital inclusion strategy is focused on optimising the digital offer so residents stay connected and this amplifies the menu of resident involvement options.

## **Recommendation 9**

***Officers should work with stakeholders to ensure that residents are able to influence the process of agenda planning for more formal meetings between officers and residents. More formal meetings should be minuted and minutes circulated. Consideration will need to be given to who would be best placed to take on this task.***

41. This recommendation is welcome. The current resident involvement framework aims to put residents firmly in the leading role and the chairs of the local housing forums, tenant and homeowner forums currently set the agenda for all meetings.

42. Formal meetings are convened with the chair and various heads of services to formally discuss and agree the agenda for each meeting. The meetings are resident led and invited officers are required to talk to each agenda item and respond to questions from residents. The forums provide an accountable framework for residents to scrutinise the service.
43. Meeting minutes are now recorded for all formal meetings and action points are noted and assigned to each team or department to address.

#### **Recommendation 10**

***Following on from this report and, in particular, from Recommendations 1 & 2 above, the Council should arrange a one day or half day conference of interested parties to communicate and discuss the findings from this report and from the evaluation of the Resident Participation Framework (as per Recommendation 2) and how to best support the Citizens' Jury's deliberations (see Recommendation 4).***

44. Working with the respective chairs and the cabinet member, officers of the council will convene a bespoke workshop during the consultation phase of the resident involvement strategy consultation period.

#### **Recommendation 11**

***Residents taking on executive committee/ officer positions in constituent bodies within the Resident Participation Framework should be required to act in accordance with the Nolan Principles and submit a Register of Interests form in which they declare any private interests which may conflict or be perceived to conflict with their public duties.***

45. This recommendation is welcomed and the work of the commission is very helpful. This recommendation reflects the need for proper governance, democratic accountability as well as probity and scrutiny of all those entrusted with the management of payments from the resident participation fund.
46. This recommendation is accepted and very timely. The resident involvement team will continue to work with TRAs and other voluntary groups who are in receipt of resources from the resident involvement fund to make the declaration of interests together with the completion of the register of interest forms as a standard business agenda.
47. The governance of resident participation will be fully reviewed over the coming year. Beyond declaration of interests there is also a need to ensure that all tenants involved in TRA's or other publicly funded involvement mechanisms conform to all expectations of those who work in community and spend public money. An example would be that TRA's, for example, have a code of conduct which will reflect the values of the community they represent and the council whose money funds a significant proportion of community engagement.

## **Recommendation 12**

***Residents should receive full training for their roles within the resident participation structures in recognition of the importance this has in enabling productive engagement, representation and capacity building.***

48. The commission are thanked for this recommendation.
49. Empowerment and capacity building is at the heart of the social housing regulatory framework. Tenants are key partners in delivering landlord services. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 require landlords to assess their performance against the experiences of tenants.
50. The council will continue to put training and empowerment of residents at the heart of resident involvement to enable them to lead investigations and reviews of major landlord services and make the landlord services accountable to tenants.
51. Cabinet has already devoted over £100,000 to provide training for residents to equip them with the tools residents need to scrutinise the service and work collaboratively with officers and contractors to ensure the council as a landlord consistently delivers very good landlord services.
52. The resident involvement team will continue to partner with the tenant participation advisory service (TPAS), the chartered institute of housing (CIH) and the housing quality network (NQN) to provide bespoke training and support for residents.
53. Part of the review into resident involvement will look at how to promote more training and development opportunities for under-represented groups so they are able to be part of the formal and informal resident involvement structures to hold the council accountable for the management and delivery of landlord services in line with principles of Southwark Stands Together.

## **Policy framework implications**

### **Community Equalities (Including socio-economic) and health impacts**

54. Thorough consideration of equality issues has been and will continue to be a crucial part in the consultation process both for staff and residents to ensure that the council meets its public sector equality duty as set out in s149 of the Equality Act 2010.
55. The consultation exercise will also be informed by the principles and pledges of Southwark Stands Together to eliminate racism, promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

## **Community impact assessment**

56. The council has made a commitment in the council plan to always work to make Southwark more equal and just and stand against all forms of discrimination. Views will be sought from all residents and additional measures such as working with community champions, targeted home visits and phone calls to under-represented residents, themed events will be employed to make the consultation process very inclusive.

## **Peopled powered Southwark impact assessment**

57. Putting residents at the heart of everything we do and empowering communities to shape the places they live in and make decisions about issues which affect their lives is critical to the work of the resident involvement team.

## **Impact on neighbourhoods**

58. A resident involvement framework that resonates with residents contributes to understanding the needs, priorities and aspirations of residents for their neighbourhoods and local community. It helps to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by residents and how to work together to find practical solutions.

## **Closing the gap**

59. The March 2021 census revealed multiple levels of deprivation in the borough and there is a need to work collaboratively with residents to address the indices of social and economic deprivation.
60. This includes empowering residents to hold landlord service providers accountable for the services they provide to residents such as repairs, grounds maintenance, estate cleaning to improve local neighbourhoods.

## **Health impact statement**

61. The council as a landlord is required to provide decent, safe and well-maintained homes and to embed the views of residents in designing and delivering landlord services.
62. Resident empowerment and capacity building is key to holding the council as a landlord accountable for providing a customer-focused housing management service.

## **Climate change implications**

63. Resident empowerment and capacity building is central to holding the council as a landlord accountable for providing effective landlord services.
64. The Great Estates programme is one of the many ways residents are involved in the environmental improvement of their estates. The gardening projects help to

reverse climate change. The new waste recycling bins installed on the pilot estates have helped to improve recycling which has a significant benefit for the environment.

### **Resource implications**

65. The recommendations and their implementation will be delivered within the existing financial governance rules of the council. Until a review of resident engagement is carried out, it is unknown whether there will be an impact on the budget however officers expect that, with the possible exception of recommendation 5, all recommendations could be implemented within existing resource.
66. There may also be an implication on staffing resources, however, the implementation of changes would look to be funded from within existing resources.

### **Legal implications**

67. See below concurrent from the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance

### **Finance implications**

68. See below concurrent from the Strategic Director of Finance.

### **Next steps**

69. Once this report is approved and noted by cabinet, the resident involvement team, will, with the cabinet member for council housing, develop a draft resident involvement strategy to be consulted on in the coming months. Any of the recommendations above which need to be part of the consultation for that strategy will be reviewed, in compliance with the formal governance arrangements and implementation work will begin.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance**

70. This report requests cabinet to agree the proposed response to the recommendations of the Environment and Community Engagement scrutiny commission's report on the residents' participation framework. It is noted that the next step is for officers to develop a draft resident involvement strategy to be consulted on. The Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance her staff will provide advice to officers on any legal and governance issues arising during development of the strategy.
71. To meet legal requirements, consultation on the strategy must be undertaken when proposals are at a formative stage and include sufficient reasons for the proposals and time for interested parties to respond. The product of the

consultation must be carefully considered when finalising and agreeing the strategy.

72. The public sector equality duty (PSED) in the Equality Act 2010 must also be given conscious consideration. Specifically, regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, (b) to advance equality of opportunity and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. The relevant characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The PSED general duty is a continuing duty and equality considerations should be considered at all stages of development of the strategy. Including where any disproportionate effects on groups sharing protected characteristics are identified, considering how this may be mitigated.
73. Under Part 3D of the Council's Constitution agreement to broad consultation arrangements is reserved to individual cabinet members in relation to their areas of responsibility.

#### **Strategic Director of Finance**

74. The Strategic Director of Finance notes the recommendation to the Residents' Participation Framework Mini-Review. There are no financial implications arising as a direct result of this report, however, a further review of resident engagement, the staffing structure as well as recommendation 5, which recommends the council should adopt a system of financial incentives for residents time needs to be completed and may have financial implications. However, at this stage, it is expected all changes will be funded within the existing annual budget for Resident Involvement.

#### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

No.	Title
Appendix A	Mini-Review of the Residents' Participation Framework by the Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission
<b>Link (Please copy and paste into browser):</b> <a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s114679/Appendix%20A%20Resident%20Participation%20Framework%20mini%20scrutiny%20review%20report.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s114679/Appendix%20A%20Resident%20Participation%20Framework%20mini%20scrutiny%20review%20report.pdf</a>	

#### **APPENDICES**

No.	Title
None.	

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Homes, Communities and Finance	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Cheryl Russell, Director of Resident Services	
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<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 & Assurance	Yes	No
Strategic Director of Finance	Yes	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
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