

REPORT TO:	Informal Cabinet – 18/05/2020	18/05/2020
	Scrutiny & Overview Committee	09/06/2020
	Cabinet	29/06/2020
LEAD CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Hazel Smith Lead Member for Housing	
LEAD OFFICER:	Peter Campbell – Head of Housing Services	

Resident Involvement Strategy 2020-2023

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to consider the Draft Resident Involvement Strategy for wider consultation with tenants.
2. The Draft Resident Involvement Strategy sets out the opportunities for Council tenants (including leaseholders) to fully participate in the development and improvement of their housing service.
3. In developing the Strategy, a tenant and Member steering group was established to review the current activities for resident involvement. As part of the review a new framework has been developed, including the implementation of a Housing Engagement Board, that provides the means and methods for tenants to have meaningful engagement. It also encourages more tenants to be engaged through better communications and provides a variety of opportunities that allow tenants to participate either a little or a lot.

4. The outcome of implementing the Strategy will be a better informed, empowered tenant community. It promotes a relationship of trust and cooperation between SCDC and their tenants.

Key Decision

5. This is a key decision because it is significant in terms of its effects on tenants and leaseholders living in SCDC council homes. This will cover areas comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority and it was first published in the July 2019 Forward Plan. It is scheduled for the 29th June 2020 Cabinet.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Draft Resident Involvement Strategy 2020-2023 (Appendix 1) to go out to wider tenant consultation. That Cabinet also delegates authority to the Lead Member for Housing to approve the final Strategy subject to any minor amendments arising from this consultation, from any new guidance issued by the Regulator for Social Housing or from guidance issued by Government if/when the issues within the Green Paper become law.

Reasons for Recommendations

7. This Strategy sets out how the Council will engage with its tenants and leaseholders and includes a new tenant engagement framework and the establishment of a Housing Engagement Board to ensure that our tenants have the opportunity to be involved in its management and hold the Council to account. The Strategy has been developed in accordance with the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing relating to the Consumer Standard and in particular the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

8. The Strategy through the new framework and communication channels also fulfils the recommendations outlined in the Social Housing Green Paper following the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Details

9. The last Resident Involvement Strategy ran from 2016-2018, and whilst it was due to be refreshed it was felt prudent to wait for further information to come out from the Green Paper, “New Deal for Social Housing”.
10. The Green Paper was heavily informed by the conclusions arising from the Grenfell Tower disaster that tenants’ concerns were not heard. The Green Paper stresses the importance of tenant involvement and that ‘housing providers must demonstrate how they respond to tenants’ needs in the way they provide services and how they communicate’. It is fairly certain that future legislation will require a robust framework in place for tenants to communicate and influence decisions relating to their housing management.
11. The Draft Resident Involvement Strategy 2020-2023 approach to tenant and leaseholder involvement (Resident Involvement) is driven by a combination of input from tenants, current and anticipated changes in legislation, evaluation of current practice, and observation of best practice elsewhere.
12. As part of the development of the Strategy, a steering group was established involving tenant representatives, the Lead Member for Housing – Councillor Hazel Smith, the Scrutiny Monitor for Housing - Councillor Claire Daunton and senior housing officers. The steering group’s remit was to review the current tenant involvement activities and to look at a new framework that delivers more meaningful engagement for tenants and leaseholders.
13. The new framework, including the establishment of the Housing Engagement Board, ensures that tenants/leaseholders can help influence service improvements and scrutinise performance and decisions affecting their housing

management; as well as ensuring there are appropriate and accessible communication channels.

Options

<p>14. Option A – To approve the Draft Resident Involvement Strategy 2020-2023 to go out to wider tenant consultation (Appendix 1).</p> <p>15. That Cabinet also delegates authority to the Lead Member for Housing to approve the final Strategy subject to any minor amendments arising from this consultation, from any new guidance issued by the Regulator for Social Housing or from guidance issued by Government if/when the issues within the Green Paper become law.</p>	<p>Reasons for Approval – The Strategy will demonstrate how the Council is meeting the regulatory requirements for tenant and leaseholder involvement.</p>
<p>16. Option B – To reject the draft Resident Involvement Strategy 2020-23 and the proposals set out in the Strategy for a new scrutiny and governance framework, including the establishment of the Housing Engagement Board.</p>	<p>Reasons for Refusal: Without an up to date Resident Involvement Strategy and the right mechanisms in place for tenants and leaseholders to be involved to help shape and influence decisions relating to the housing service, the Council is unable to demonstrate how it is meeting the Regulatory Requirements.</p>

Implications

17. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Financial

18. There are no significant implications. The new framework will be implemented within existing budgets.

Legal

19. The Resident Involvement Strategy will demonstrate how it is meeting the Social Housing Regulatory Requirements in terms of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

Staffing

20. There are no significant implications. The new framework and resident involvement activities will be undertaken within the existing resident involvement team.

Risks/Opportunities

21. The proposed new framework offers greater opportunities for tenants to have their voice heard through a robust and transparent scrutiny and governance framework. The Strategy sets out the opportunities to distribute more information about key SCDC initiatives and encourages tenants to support them. The risks of implementation are that the Council is unable to attract a wider range of tenants to represent the Council's tenant and leaseholder community in its scrutiny and governance role. It is anticipated that this risk can be mitigated through greater

support and incentives for tenants to get engaged, as well as promoting more widely through a variety of communication channels.

Equality and Diversity

22. An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken and no significant implications have been identified.

Climate Change

23. The increase in digital communication will enable SCDC to improve its communications without impacting on the environment. The Draft Strategy also sets out how it will run campaigns to encourage tenants to support the Green to our Core objectives.

Consultation responses

24. Members of the Tenant Participation Group (TPG), Sheltered Housing and Leaseholder forums were surveyed in October 2019, which has helped to shape the Draft Resident Involvement Strategy.

25. A steering group made up of tenants, councillors and housing officers was set-up to review current resident involvement arrangements and to look at options for improvement. The steering group met from November 2019-January 2020.

26. Members of the Tenant Participation Group were independently consulted on the outcome of the findings of the steering group.

27. Through the consultation process, there was a consensus that the current framework was not delivering meaningful engagement. Tenants did not feel that they had influence and their views were not being taken into consideration. Some members of the TPG stated they did not think the TPG had a clear purpose.

28. There was consensus that moving to the proposed new framework that included the Housing Engagement Board would provide more influence. It was also felt that holding meetings locally would provide more engagement than the existing quarterly forums.

29. The ability to engage people digitally was considered positive, but there was concern raised that this should not be the only means of communication as not all tenants are able to access digital information easily. To ensure that other methods of communication are also used, it is proposed that estate officers on sheltered schemes will provide local newsletters and SCDC will continue to produce the tenants and leaseholders magazine in printed form.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in

30. Ensuring that tenants have a voice and there is a robust framework in place to scrutinise budgets and service improvements, as well as good communication in terms of financial support available, will help to ensure that the Council's housing remains affordable for everyone to live in.

Being green to our core

31. The Draft Resident Involvement Strategy has a focus on promoting community gardens that provide habitats for insects and bees.

32. The communication channels provide the means to support Green to the Core campaigns and promote ways and means tenants and leaseholders can contribute to energy efficiency, recycling, water conservation and other green initiatives.

A modern and caring Council

33. The resident involvement framework provides tenants and leaseholders a voice on housing issues. It demonstrates that the Council is listening and responding to tenants.
34. The new framework will encourage tenants to become more involved and volunteer to help improve their community. This will deliver benefits both to the individual and to the community as a whole
35. The communication channels provide the means to provide information, encouragement, highlight positive events and reduce stigma associated with social housing.

Background Papers

36. The Social Housing Regulator – Regulations for Social Housing (Consumer Standard) The Tenant Empowerment Standard 2017
37. The Government Social Housing Green Paper “New Deal for Social Housing” August 2018
38. Tenant Panels – Option for Accountability (National Tenant Organisation)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Resident Involvement Strategy 2020-2023

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